PRĀGJYOTIṢA

Souvenir

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ALL INDIA ORIENTAL CONFERENCE
• XXII SESSION •
GAUHATI, ASSAM
JANUARY 1965

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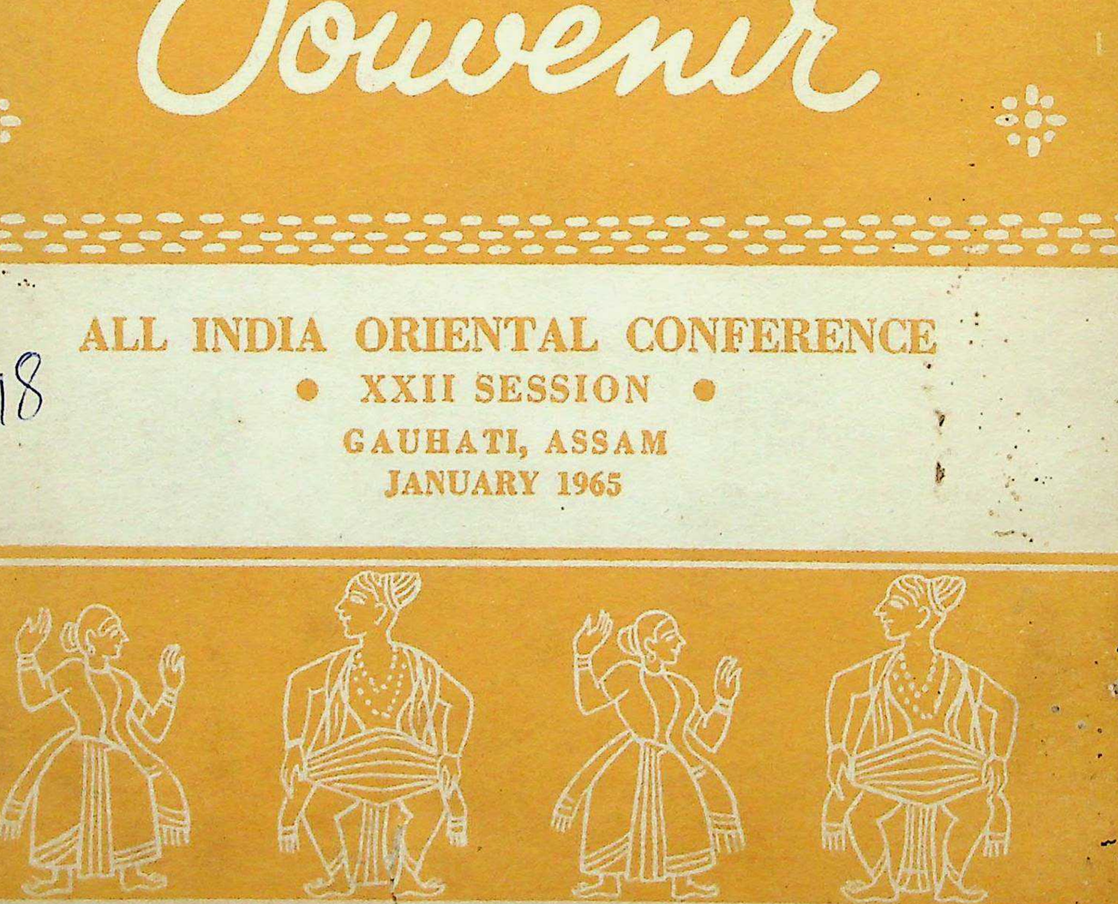

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Edited by
Dr MAHESWAR NEOG

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1965
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XXII SESSION,
ALL INDIA ORIENTAL CONFERENCE

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FOREWORD

I have to express grateful thanks to the authorities of the All India Oriental Conference that they have agreed to accept the Government of Assam's invitation to have the twenty-second session of this great organisation of Orientology here at Gauhati in Assam. Rightly or wrongly, Assam is very often referred to as a pāṇḍava-varjita deśa, a country forsaken by the Pāṇḍavas and, for that matter, all Aryans. It has so long been forsaken by the Oriental Conference, if not by the Orientalists. It is a happy augury that great Orientalists of the country as well as some from abroad are assembling here and that Assam is now to be on the highway of Oriental learning formally. We have had noted Orientalists and Sanskritists in our midst, beginning with the great Anundoram Barooah (who died young but was even then a great pioneer in the field of modern Sanskrit learning), Mahāmahopadhyāya Dhireswar Bhattacharya, Mahāmahopāphyāya Padmanath Bhattacharya Vidyāvinod, Professor Dr Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, Professor Dr Birinchi Kumar Barua having left us only very recently) and one who is still working in the field, I mean, Professor Krishna Kanta Handiqui, (who was elected to have presided over the Kashmir Session of the All India Oriental Conference). I hope the present assemblage and wise discourses of the Indian and other Orientalists will leave behind their happy trail of inspiration for the budding Orientalists of this State.

It has been found possible to make public the present collection of papers on different aspects of Assam's life, mainly cultural, to come out as a Souvenir in connection with the Conference. I hope the Orientalists will have pleasure in getting a glimpse of Assam, that often remains a neglected field for Indian historians and Orientalists, through this monograph.

(*Chief Minister, Assam*)
Chairman, Local Committee,
XXII Session, All India Oriental Conference

It is a matter of great pride and happiness for all citizens of Assam that the All India Oriental Conference is going to be held for the first time in our State. We are all very grateful to the office-bearers of this Conference. Though they have kindly accepted our humble invitation, I am aware that our limited resources will not permit us to give the great scholars attending this Conference the comfort and facilities they require. Nevertheless, it will certainly be of intellectual interest for them to see this frontier State, where different racial and cultural trends have evolved a variegated pattern within the frame of great Indian culture.

Devkanta Barooah

(*Minister of Education, Assam*)
Working Chairman, Local Committee,
XXII Session, All India Oriental Conference

In Memoriam

Dr Suryya Kumar Bhuyan & Dr Birinchi Kumar Barua

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Ethnic Elements in Assam

By

BHUBAN M. DAS

The geographical position of Assam is such that it is almost like a highway through which passed from India on one hand and south-east Asia on the other different ethnic groups at different intervals leaving their ethnic and cultural substrata in the land and thus making the region honey-combed with various elements of people, who speak different languages, have different social structures, cultural patterns and religious ideas, and are of different ethnic make-ups. These people entered Assam at different times and by different routes, the possible routes of migration being mainly four. Firstly, the Assam-Burma routes on the eastern side, of which one is through Cachar and Manipur in the south-east, the other is in the north-east through the Patkoi ranges. Secondly, the northern passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. The third one is by sea, that is by the Bay of Bengal via Burma or Bengal, and the fourth one is on the western direction and is formed by the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges.

The present-day population of Assam may broadly be divided into tribal and caste groups. Generally speaking, Assam received her caste population from the west, who came by the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. On the other hand, most of the tribal groups entered Assam from the north and the east and to some extent from the south by various routes.

Very broadly speaking, the caste populations, who mainly occupy the rich alluvial valley of the Brahmaputra, are Caucasic in origin having fine physical features and scopic characters comparable to those of the Caucasic peoples of some part of northern India, while Mongoloid elements invariably predominate among the tribal populations.

At the present state of knowledge it is difficult to bring out systematically and scientifically the various ethnic elements that have entered into the population of Assam. Because unfortunately, in Assam no systematic anthropometric survey has so far been attemted. There are, however, several sets of measurements taken by various workers at different times. But all these are from among the tribal populations. Anthropometric data on caste populations are too meagre to deserve systematic analysis.

Therefore, when in 1924 Dr A. C. Haddon wrote his book *The Races of Man*, which includes information on the ethnic elements in Assam also, he could utilize only four sets of anthropometric data. These were, (1) Waddell's (1901) data on 564 individuals collected from among 33 groups ; (2) Brown and Kemp's (1915) data on 84 male and 10 female Abor individuals ; (3) Hutton's (1921) measurements on 234 individuals of seven Naga tribes, and (4) Dixon's (1922) metric data on 25 Khasi, 8 Sema Naga and 10 Angami Naga. The material for Assam included in *The Peoples of Asia* by Buxton (1925) was also nearly the same as that of Haddon.

On analysis of the above data Haddon found the following ethnic elements in Assam : (1) Dolichocephalic platyrrhine type (Pre-Dravidian), "which is strong among the Khasi, Kuki, Manipuri, Kachari, etc., but is weaker among the Naga tribes" ; (2) Dolichocephalic-mesorrhine type (Nesiot element), which is noticed in the Naga and other hill tribes ; (3) Mesocephalic-mesorrhine type which occurs also in India among the Lepcha and Murmi and in certain castes in Bengal and Behar ; (5) Brachycephalic-leptorrhine type came from the north and is related to the Eurasiatic group ; (6) Brachycephalic-platyrrhine type which is a variety of the Pareoean ; and (7) Dolichocephalic-leptorrhine element which came from India.

Since the time of publication of Haddon's book up to the present time several sets of anthropometric data on various populations have been published by different workers. For instance, Singh (1935) and Kaufmann (1958) worked independently among the various Naga tribes. Kuki data of Shaw (1928) and T. C. Das (1945) are also worth mentioning. Various authors, like T. C. Raychoudhury (1935), B. S. Guha (1935), Bowles (1943) and B. M. Das (unpublished) studied the physical characters of the Khasi. K. Pakrasi (1952) measured the Mikir, while T. C. Sarma (1961-62) measured the Miri and the Deuri. M. N. Phookan (1959-61) worked among the Kachari. These workers only noted the physical characters of the tribe, but did not attempt to find out the constituent ethnic elements. B. M. Das, who worked among several groups, like the Garo, the Rabha, the Kachari, the Rajbansi, the Hajong, the Khamyang, attempted in two of his studies to suggest the ethnic make-up of the Bodo groups of Assam.

Dr B. S. Guha has postulated "six main races with nine sub-types" in the population of India. Among the tribal populations he has observed three main elements, namely, Negrito, Proto-Australoid and Mongoloid.

On the basis of hair form and some aspects of material culture, authors like Guha, Hutton and Mills have pointed to the existence of a Negrito strain in Assam, more particularly among some of the Naga tribes. But the presence of a Negrito racial strain in the mainland of India itself has become a disputed subject. Most of the earlier observations had been based on frizzly or woolly hair only. But sporadic cases of frizzly or woolly hair alone by no means can support the existence of a Negrito strain in the basic substratum of a population. It requires through enquiry in the light of modern researches. For instance, recent works of Dr S. S. Sarkar and others of Calcutta University reveal that the Kadar of Kerala, who were considered to possess an essentially Negrito character "belong to the Veddid or Australoid ethnic stock". Therefore, until and unless a systematic study is carried out among the Naga tribes, the Negrito racial strain cannot be asserted.

The Proto-Australoids are very often referred to by different terms like Pre-Dravidian, Australoid, Veddid, Nishada by different authors. No Veddid population as such lives in the state of Assam. But there are reasons to believe that Veddid elements exist in some groups of Assam. In analysing the anthropometric data of some Bodo groups (e.g., Garo, Kachari, Rabha, and Koch), it appeared probable to the present writer that the Veddid contributed much of the dolichocephalic and hyperdolichocephalic strain to the basic substratum of the Bodo population of Assam. The presence of hyper-dolichocephaly in the Rabha and the Garo is probably suggestive of the same. Haddon also "tentatively suggested an ancient dolichocephalic-platyrrhine type (Pre-Draviadian) which is strong among the Kuki, Khasi, Manipuri, Kachari, etc." Guha and Basu (1931) found two racial types among the Naga crania which were termed Group I and Group II. The latter was identified to be Australoid, while the former one was identified as Mongoloid. Buxton wrote that in the eastern frontier of India, "the basal type and probably the aboriginal, is the Pre-Dravidian, but there is no exact data on this point at present. It was found among many of the more isolated tribes."

Among the Mros of the Chittagong Hills, Mills (1931) observed "the almost entire absence of Mongolian traits in their features". Sarkar (1958) calls it "an old Veddid pocket". In Assam the Khasi speak an Austric language which is associated with the Proto-Australoid. Chatterji (1950) writes that "in Burma and Indo-China lived speakers of Austric (Austro-Asiatic) languages who were largely of the Proto-Australoid race from India."

Thus the Veddids appear to have come to Assam or passed through Assam, at a very early date. In any case they left behind some racial strains. They probably came before the coming of the Mongoloids, who partially or wholly absorbed the old Veddid strains.

A similar phenomenon probably occurred in Burma and Indo-China also as is evident from the linguistic researches.

The most predominating constituent ethnic element of the tribes of Assam is Mongoloid. These Mongoloid peoples entered Assam by different routes at different periods. These tribes may conveniently be grouped under several heads, like the Khasi, the Bodo, the Naga, the Mizo-Kuki and others.

The Khasi and Jaintia are an Austro-Asiatic community and they speak a language of the Mon-Khmer linguistic group, which is still in use in Combodia. Not only in language but in some cultural traits also, the Khasi and the Jaintia show a strong affinity with the Mon and Khmer speakers of south-east Asia. For instance, serpent worship which still survives amongst these people in the famous *thlen* superstition has its counterpart in the ancient religion of the Mon and the Khmer. On the other hand, the linguistic affinity between the Khasi and the Mundari speaking peoples of central India is a well-known fact. Moreover, the Khasi erect memorial stones or monoliths in the memory of their dead. Evidences of similar practices are found among the Ho and Munda who have death customs very similar to those of the Khasi. Again Sir Arthur Keith has pointed out that there is evidence that the original population of Bengal was akin to the Khasi of Assam.

They are a matriarchal people in the truest sense. They trace the line of descent from the mother's side. Marriage is matrilocal. Inheritance is in the female line. Succession to office also shows a characteristic feature of the matrilineal society.

The Khasi are a short-statured people, having a mesocephalic head. The frequency of dolichocephaly is also high. The nose is mesorrhine to platyrrhine.

According to some authors the earliest inhabitants of Assam were speakers of a language which belongs to the Mon-Khmer family. They were followed by various peoples speaking Tibeto-Burman languages. The original homeland of these peoples was in north-west China near the Hwang-Ho and Yang-tse-kiang rivers, from where they migrated southward and became diversified somewhere in North Burma. One group entered the Brahmaputra valley by the north-eastern route, while the other remained there to move to the south on later occasions. In Assam they gradually extended their territory in different directions and occupied most of the country, except the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, which was already occupied by the speakers of a Mon-Khmer language.

Of these Tibeto-Burman groups the most important one is formed by the Bodo tribes. The term Bodo is used to denote a large number of peoples who speak Bodo languages, and thus there is a common affinity amongst the different members of this group. The Bodo, not at a very distant past, proved themselves to be a very powerful race occupying the entire Brahmaputra valley. They even extended their area of occupation to north Bengal. To the south they not only occupied the Garo Hills, the abode of the Garo, who are a Bodo speaking tribe, but also spread over northern Maimansing, where the Hajong are of Bodo origin. From Nowgong district their territory extended to north Cachar and into Sylhet (now in Pakistan). From these places again they extended further south to Tripura, where the Tippera, a Bodo speaking people live. Thus it appears that at one time they occupied a very large area, which extended beyond the geographical boundary of present-day Assam.

The hair form of these tribes is smooth and flat wavy. Hair texture is coarse. Beard and moustache are scanty. Mongolian or median fold is present in the majority of cases. The palpebral fissure is narrow medium and the slit is oblique. Zygomatic arches are medium to marked in prominence. The face shows slight or medium prognathism. This in general appearance they are Mongoloid. Some of the individuals, however, show deviation from the Mongoloid characteristics. Though their number is small, they cannot be ignored. The non-Mongoloid physical characteristics observed in some of the Bodo speaking people are rather too strong to be brushed aside without a thorough examination.

The Garo, the Kachari, the Rabha and the Koch, are characterised by short to below-medium stature, dolichocephalic to mesocephalic head and mesorrhine nose. But among the Rabha and the Koch the dolichocephalic element is very predominant, and among the Garo platyrrhine noses are considerably frequent.

On analysis of the anthropometric data of the Bodo it seems probable that the Veddid also contributed to the basic substratum of the Bodo population, among whom the Mongoloid elements are much stronger. The Indo-Aryans might have contributed to the ethnic make-up of these peoples at a later stage.

The various Naga tribes live in the Naga Hills and the adjacent regions. They are not a homogeneous set of people. They are also Mongoloid and belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. A Nesiot element is suspected among them. In them, and more particularly among the Sema Naga, Guha observed a Palaeo-Mongoloid strain. The Mizo and the other tribes of the Mizo-Kuki group live in the southernmost district of the state and the adjacent areas.

The Tai or Shan migrated from Yun-nan towards upper Burma, from where a branch of them, the Ahom, entered Assam in the thirteenth century. Ultimately the Ahom overran and conquered Assam. In later periods they were followed by other Shan tribes, namely, the Khamti, the Aiton, the Phakial, the Turung and the Khamyang.

It has been mentioned earlier that the caste-groups of Assam have not yet been scientifically studied from this point of view, and that these are Caucasic in origin. It is, however, admitted that a considerable amount of Mongoloid admixture with these people took place. The Mongoloid infiltration becomes more and more marked as one goes up the valley towards the north-east.

The Kalita form a very important and interesting caste-group of Assam. Various works have been written as regards the origin of these people, but it is still a subject of speculation. According to some they entered India through the north-western route, settled in upper India and then migrated eastwards, ultimately reaching the Brahmaputra valley. They were Ksatriya. Again in the opinion of others they came to Assam before the Vedic Aryan. They were non-Vedic Aryan, and not Ksatriya. A very early migration of a section of the Caucasic people has been suggested by many anthropologists. They were dolichocephalic Aryan bearing Indo-European features. They were supposed to form a continuous chain extending from the Mediterranean region to south-east Asia.

According to some anthropologists like Keane, some Caucasic elements are believed to have been brought to Assam through Burma by a section of Mongoloid people, which they received as a result of admixture with the Caucasic people, that migrated from their original homeland towards south-east China in the neolithic times ; that is why a Caucasic element is suspected among certain tribes of north-east Assam.

Thus it appears that Assam is a place where peoples of diverse ethnic strains met and lived, who in the process of time contributed to the evolution of a complex but composite culture, hardly to be found elsewhere in India.

The Assamese Language : A Brief Survey

By

G. C. GOSWAMI

1. Introductory : The language, the land and the speakers. Assamese is the Anglicized name for Asamīyā, pronounced ɔxɔmia, by which name it is known among the people of the state. One of the fourteen constitutionally recognized national languages of the country, it is spoken in the easternmost state of Assam, pronounced ɔxɔm, mainly in the Brahmaputra Valley districts covering a long area with North Lakhimpur in the east and Goalpara in the west. With a total population of 11, 872, 772 in the state, it is the mother tongue of 6,784,271 persons, and is spoken and understood as a second language by 1, 631, 396 other inhabitants of the state.[1]

Assamese is surrounded on all sided by languages of the great Sino-Tibetan and Thai-Kadai families, with Khasi, an Austric speech forming a linguistic islet in the middle. It is an Indo-Aryan language derived from Magadhi Prakrit and its Apa-bhraṁśa dialects which had been the immediate parents of all the main aryan languages of North-Eastern India, viz. Assamese, Bengali, Oriya and the Behari dialects. According to Dr S. K. Chatterji Magadhi Prakrit gave rise to four Apabhraṁśa dialect groups, viz. Rāḍha, Vaṅga, Vārendra and Kāmarūpa ; and from the dialect group of Kāmarūpa developed the language of North Bengal and Assam. In early times, the language of North Bengal and Assam constituted a single dialect group. The Kocha kings of Koch Behar, now in West Bengal, patronized Assamese language and literature to a very great extent : Assamese literature, in fact, reached its flourishing stage under the patronage of Mahārāja Naranārāyana and his brother, Chilārāy, in the 15th-16th centuries A.D. During the last century the language of North Bengal has been influenced to a great extent by its neighbouring language, Bengali, and after the political amalgamation of the area with West Bengal, the process of change has been accelerated.

2. Early references : Hiuen Ts'ang the great Chinese traveller visited Kāmarūpa, the early name by which present Assam was referred to, in 643 A.D. during the reign of Kumār Bhāskaravarman. He recorded[2] that the language of the land differed a little from that of mid-India. Kāmarūpa had been Aryanized by the first two centuries preceding and following Christ;[3] and Bhāskaravarman was a Hindu king, who patronized Sanskrit learning and culture. Therefore, by the 7th century A.D. the kingdom of the Kumāra that extended to a larger part of Bengal must have been populated by the Aryans who, by virtue of superiority spread the Aryan language. The Chinese traveller, by the statement 'differing a little from that of mid-India' must have noted the individual growth and development of the eastern Apabhraṁśa dialect that developed into the Assamese language later on. The newly evolved language accepted a great deal of innovations in all the departments, phonology, morphology and vocabulary so as to present it in a unique shape and form quite distinctive of all other sister languages of the coutnry. These innovations or peculiarities were the results of the fusion of Aryan and extra-Aryan speakers into a common fold and medium, viz. Assamese; and that this fusion was very early had been evidenced by Hiuen Tsang in his remarks on the language. The Aryan language was thrust upon the non-Aryan population that accepted it as, and shaped and moulded it with all the requirements and characteristics of, a lingua franca for whole of the multi-lingual eastern India since very early times,—the acceptance of Assamese as the state language for consolidation of the Ahom kingdom spread far around into the tribal areas by the 15th-16th centuries A.D., by the Āhom kings, the Shān conquerors who gave the present name Assam to the state,[4] after three hundred years of administrative experiences is a strong evidence in point.

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[1] These figures are from the last Census of 1961. The Census Report on the linguistic data is not published yet. The above is by curtesy of the the Superintendent of Census Operation, Assam, 1961, through personal communication.

The earliest specimen of the language. The copper-plate inscriptions[5] of the early Assam kings dating back from the fifth century A.D. onwards, written though in Sanskrit, give clear indication on certain phonological features of the spoken language of the time, which have been carried over to the present day speech. As for example, the vowel harmony of the spoken affected the Sanskrit language also which had been clear from the spelling mistakes of the scribers of the inscriptions. The present velarization of all the Śanskrit sibilants is evidenced by the confusion in spelling of *ś*, *ṣ* and *s* written indiscriminately; and so is alveolarization of the

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[2] Thomas Watters : *On Yuan Chang's Travels in India*, Vol. 2, p. 186.

[3] B. Kakati : *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, 1948, §§25, 26; S. K. Chatterji : Assam and India, in *The Heritage of Assam*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 2. The author holds that "During the time extending over one millennium, from 1000 B.C. onwards, a silent Aryanisation of Assam was evidently taking place".

[4] B. Kakati : *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*, second revised edition, Gauhati, 1962, (hereafter to be referred to as *A.F.D.* only), § § 2-3; S. K. Chatterjee; "The name 'Assam-Ahom'", in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, pp. 147-153 (1956).

[5] The Copperplate inscriptions of early Assam kings have been edited and published in the *Kāmarūpa-Śāsanāvalī*, by P. N. Bhattacharyya Vidyāvinod.

Sanskrit dental and cerebral stops and alveolarization and spirantization of the palatal affricate series.

The earliest literary specimen, however, is available in the mystic *dohās* of the Buddhist Siddhācāryas, better known as the *Caryās*. These *dohās* discovered and brought to India by M. M. Haraprasād Śāstrī from Nepal were written by eighty-four Siddhas hailing from various parts of eastern India. A few of them have been recognized decidedly to have come from Kāmarūpa by authorities like the great Sino-Tibetologist Dr G. Tucci. According to Dr P. C. Bagchi these *dohās* were composed in between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D.

The language of the *dohās* is late Apabhraṁśa and therefore represents the formative period of the New Indo-Aryan languages. Some of the features both phonological and morphological have been identified as typically Assamese and carried over through the centuries up to the present day language.[6] Some of the idiomatic expressions used in the *dohās* are quite homely even today among the Assamese people. Besides the linguistic features, the literary form, viz., the *dohā,* is also a a precursor of the Assamese *bargīt,* the song celestial, composed by the early Vaiṣṇava poets of Assam.

But the earliest literary work available so far, which may be claimed as distinctly Assamese is the *Prahrāda-carita* written by Hema Sarasvatī in the later half of the thirteenth century A.D. The language of this small poem seems to have been still nurtured in the cradle of its Apabhraṁśa mother. Ever since the fourteenth century A.D. there have been a continuous stream of literature to the modern times. The prose style of writing was introduced by the great Vaiṣṇava reformer, Śaṅkaradeva, in his one-act dramas of the sixteenth century, which developed in the following century in the writings of Vaikuṇṭhanāth Bhaṭṭācārya Kaviratna who translated the entire *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* into a masterly prose style. The *Kathā-guru-carita,* the prose biography of the Vaiṣṇava gurus of the sixteenth and seventeenth century and the historical writings, better known as the *buraṅjī,* evidence the proud treasures of early Assamese prose works.

3. Dialects and dialectical divergences :[7] Dialectically the linguistic map of Assam may be divided into two major regions, Eastern Assamese covering the whole of the eastern districts up to Nowgong, and Western Assamese beginning with the western half of Nowgong down to the district of Goalpara. Eastern Assamese which has greater uniformity in the area is regarded as the Standard Dialect and is used in modern literature.

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[6] B. Kakati : *A.F.D.,* §§ 14-15.

[7] The above analysis about the dialect divisions are from my personal observations. Dr Kakati has discussed the subject in his *A.F.D.* § § 33-39 ; Dr U. N. Goswami of Gauhati University has done some work on the analysis of a north Kamarup dialect for his doctoral dissertation, not published yet.

Western Assamese is further divided into a good many sub-dialects : South Kāmrūpī, the dialect of the south bank of the Brahmaputra river, is to some extent uniform ; while the North Kāmrūpī has two dialect divisions, Eastern Kāmrūpī dialect comprising the dialect of whole of the north-eastern Kāmrūp district and the western fringe of the districts of Darrang and Nowgong ; and Western Kāmrūpī the dialect of north-western Kāmrūp with Barpeṭā as its centre.

Similarly, the dialect in the westernmost district of Goalpara is also not uniform : the dialect of the eastern parts of the district has some affinity with Kāmrūpī, but the western Goalpara dialects differ a great deal being influenced by Bengali, Rājabaṅśī and Gāro dialects surrounding them.

In early Assamese there seems to be only one dominant dialect prevailing over the whole country ; and all early literature, poetical writings and the prose works were written in that dialect only.

The present-day literary Standard Language evolved in the middle of the ninteenth century when the American Baptist Mission established the printing-press (1836), started publication of the first Assamese Journal, the *Orunodoi* (1846), printed the second Assamese grammar (1846) and the first Assamese diictionary (1867), and thus created a tempo of writing new Assamese literature : all these they did in eastern Assam and in the dialect of the district of Sibsagar where they established headquarters for their activities in Assam ; and in this way prepared the foundation of the modern Assamese literary language accepted as the Standard norm in the state. With spread of education and growth of the number of literary persons in the western Assam districts, the Western Assamese forms also have crept into the Standard literary style ; therefore, the standard grammar of the language present forms of both the dialect groups side by side.

3. 1 The nature of dialectical divergences : The two major dialect groups, viz., Eastern and Western Assamese, are sharply differentiated in almost all the areas—phonology, morphology and vocabulary ; as a result the speakers of either group can hardly understand one another. But the differences among the Western Assamese dialects confine mainly to phonology, intonation specifically, and to vocabulary occasionally.

Phonological : (*i*) Western Assamese has a very strong initial stress in place of the medial stress of Eastern Assamese ; as a result, words in the former dialect get distorted : (a) the vowel immediately following the stressed syllable is either lost, and the neighbouring consonants form clusters, e.g., kŏriba, "you (polite) will do", becomes kŏrba ; komora, "pumkin" is kumra, etc., or, is retained in diphthongs or in triphthongs, e.g. haloa, "a plough man", is haula ; ratia, a proper name for man, is raita, and kewŏlia, "a hermit", is keuila, etc. (b) Final dipthongs change their quality and either become monophthong or change into some other dipthongs, e.g. madŏi, "queen" is made or madei ; khalŏi, "a basket for keeping fish in", is khale or khalei ; and kabŏu, "entreaty", is kabo or kabou, etc.

(*ii*) There is a predominance of high vowels in the Western Assamese as opposed to the higher-mid vowels, and of low vowels as opposed to the lower-mid vowels of Eastern Assamese dialect ; e.g. kapor, "cloth", is kapur ; mol, "worth", is mul ; nemu, "lemon", is nimu ; kŏrise, "(he) has done", is kŏrisi ; and hŏl, "is done", is hɔl, etc.

(*iii*) Western Assamese has the higher-low front Vowel as a in English 'bank', in place of the Eastern Assamese lower-mid front /æ/.

(*iv*) There is great predominance of the aspirates in the Western dialects while the Eastern dialects favour deaspiration. The occurrences of two aspirated stops in the neighbouring syllables extremely rare in Eastern Assamese, and I have recorded only one *tadbhava* word so far, is extensively common in the Western dialects. e.g. ghagŏri, "a water-pot", is ghaghri ; phopola, "hollow", is phophla ; 'bhok, "hunger", is bhɔkh or bhukh, etc.

(v) Intonation patterns of both the dialect groups are different.

(vi) The tempo of speech in the Eastern dialects is slow, and that of Western dialects is fast and very forceful.

Morphological : (i) In the declension of the nominals the Accusative and the Dative cases fall together in Western Assamese.

The pronominal derivatives of time and place in both the groups are different ; e. g. Eastern Assamese kɔt, "where", zɔt, "where ; (relative)", tŏt, "there", ŏt, "here", are Western Assamese kɔhẽ~kɔhẽi, zɔhẽ~zɔhẽi, xɔhẽ~xɔhẽi, and ɔheẽ~ɔhẽi respectively ; etia, "now", zetia, "when (relative)", tetia, "then ;" ketia, "when", of the former are ethen, zethen, tethen, and kethen respectively of the latter.

(iii) Plural morphemes are also different ; e.g. for Eastern Assamese -bor, -bilak ; the other dialect group uses -gila, -gilan and -gilak, etc.

(iv) In conjugation of the verbs the second person general suffix for present tense in Eastern Assamese is –ɔ and in Western Assamese -ah ; e.g. tɔe khaisɔ, "you (general) are eating", is tɔ̃e khaisah, etc.

The third personal suffix for past tense is -e in Eastern Assamese, and -a or -ak in Western Assamese ; e.g. kŏrile, "(he) did", is kŏrila or kŏrilak or even kŏllak, etc.

(v) The verbal post-positions are also different in both the groups.

Vocabulary : The two dialect groups of Eastern and Western Assamese, except for a small percent of the total nominal vocabulary, use entirely different words in common parlance. To cite a few examples only, Eastern Assamese kua, "well" ; gamosa, "towel" ; æsari, "whip" ; dhɔpat, "tobacco" are in Western Assamese lahnda ~ linda ~; patki ~ patiki ~; nad, phali, ~; lŏru, taṅkhu respectively.

4. A brief structural sketch :

4. 1 Phonology : Assamese has twenty-three consonants and eight vowel phonemes.

Consonants.	Stops :	Bilabials	/ p ph b bh / ;
		Alveolars	/ t th d dh / ;
		Velars	/ k, kh g gh / ;
	Fricatives ...		/ s z x h / ;
	Nasals ...		/ m n ṅ / ;
	Lateral ...		/ l / ;
	Rolled ...		/ r / ;
	Semivowels ..		/ w y / ;

The phonemes / s z n l r / are alveolars, / x / is velar and / h / is glottal.

Vowels. / * / i e æ a ɔ ŏ o u /.

The consonants. Distribution of the phonemes.

All consonants except / ṅ w y / occur initially before vowels and / p t k b d g bh dh kh m n s z h / occur initially before consonants.

All consonants occur medially and finally after vowels. The phonemes / p t d dh s z h / occur finally after consonants which are sonorants.

Aspirated stops are not very frequent finally : the voiceless ones are comparatively less frequent than the voiced ones. Two aspirated stops occurring next to each other or with intervening V or VC, where V represents a vowel or a vowel clusters, and C represents a consonant or consonant cluster, in the same word, mainly in the *tadbhava* homely forms is extremely rare in the Standard colloquial.

Important environmental variants. (i) When preceded by a vowel and followed by / y / : all consonants except / ṅ w x h / which donot occur in this environment, have half long allophones ; the aspirates have their stop element slightly long.

(ii) When preceded by a vowel and followed by / r /.

(iii) When preceded by / r / and followed by a vowel.

In both (ii) and (iii) consonants occur in half long allophones in free variation with those without length. In environment (ii) the phonemes / t th d dh n l / are very slightly retroflexed.

(iv) Finally, in this environment the spirants are relatively longer. The aspirated / ph bh/ are spirants, bilabial voiceless and voiced respectively. In some dialects / kh / also has a tendency towards pronouncing as the velar voiceless spirant / x /.

The vowels : their distribution : All the eight vowels may be nasalised with the phoneme of nasalization / ̃ / . Length of the vowel is non-phonemic. In Western Assamese dialects the higher-low front vowel replaces the lower-mid front vowel of the Standard colloquial.

The distribution of the vowels are a bit peculiar. The eight vowels present (i) eight-way contrast in closed syllables and in open syllables when / i u / do not follow in the next immediate syllable ; (ii) six-way contrast in open syllables with / i / in the next immediate syllable with intervention of any single consonant except the nasals or except with nasalization ; and (iii) five-way contrast in open syllables when / u / occurs with or without intervention of any single consonant. The contrast in (ii) between the pairs / æ e / ɔ ŏ , and in (iii) between the pairs / æ e /, Jŏ / and / o u / are neutralized.

Important environmental variants : (i) All vowels are nasalized when they are preceded by the class nasals / m n ṅ / or by / h / with a preceding nasalized vowel, and when preceded or followed by nasalized (phonemic) vowels in vowel clusters.

(ii) All vowels except / i / are followed by a [j] glide when they are followed by / y / as the last member in the following consonant cluster.

(iii) The front and the back vowels are slightly centralized and the low central vowel / a / is slightly raised when they are preceded by / r / in a consonant cluster.

(iv) Utterance of initial vowels are sometimes a little glottalized.

(v) All vowels have different degrees of length, which is allophonic, according to their distribution in a word.

4. 2. A historical note on the phonology. The history of Assamese consonantal developement is a history of phonemic merge of the language that distinguishes it from the genetically related languages of the country. From the phoneme table it is evident that the language lacks in three important series of O I A, viz. the dentals, the cerebrals and the palatals. The dental and the cerebral stops have merged into Assamese alveolar stops ; the palatal affricates *c*, *ch* and *j*, *jh* merged and spirantized into alveolar / s z / respectively ; and three sibilants *ś*, *ṣ* and *s* lost their proper enunciation and became velar voiceless / x / initially, and voiced glottal / h / elsewhere.

In the case of vowels there is phonemic split ; for example O I A *e* and *a* (short) gave rise to the Assamese / æ e / and / ɔ ŏ / respectively.

The phenomenon of the loss of the dentals and the cerebrals and their merger into the alveolars has been attributed to the influences of the local Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects that distribute throughout the whole of the Assaemse speaking area.[8]

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[8] B. Kakati : *A.F.D.* § 415.

4. 3 Morphology: There are three morphological form classes in the language : (i) the nominals including the nouns, the pronouns and the adjectives ;

(ii) the verbals, and

(iii) the indeclinables that include the adverbs also.

The nominals. The adjectives and the pronouns are sub-classes of the nominals. As adjuncts, the adjectives are not inflected. There is no inflections for comparison either, which is expressed by use of some descriptive words.

The pronouns are inflected for five cases : the Nominative, the Accusative, the Dative, the Genitive, and the Locative. Instrumental and Ablative cases are expressed by syntactic post-positions [e] and [pjra] respectively which follow the genitive case forms.

The nouns are further sub-divided into two classes : the nouns of relationship and the nouns in general.

The nouns of relationship are a small class of words which have two inflections, viz. the inflections for personal relationship and for the cases. The entire class of words expressing personal relations, such as pita, "father" ; ma or ai, "mother" ; baideu "elder sister" ; bhɔni, "younger sister", etc, including the terms of addressing friends as xŏkhi, mita, etc. constitute this class of nouns. It should be noted that in Assamese the terms of relationship are different according to the seniority or juniority of the persons related to. For example, there are words for elder brother or younger brother, but no word for brother in general ; bhai, "younger brother" ; kɔkai, "elder brother" ; bhɔni, "younger sister", and her husband is bŏinai ; bai "elder sister", and her husband is bhinihi ; mother's elder sister is zæthai, and her husband zæth pæha ; mother's younger sister is mahi, and husband, mɔha ; father's elder brother is bɔr pita or bɔr deuta, and his wife, bɔr ma or bɔr ai ; father's younger brother is khuradeu or dɔdaideu, and his wife, khuri, etc. In this way every relationship has different terms. This method of using different words for differences in the seniority or juniority of the persons concerned has been ascribed to the Kolarian influences on the language. The words are Aryan but their method of use is non-Aryan.[9]

The nouns of relationship are inflected for four persons :

(i) First personal with { ai O } (O means nothing);

(ii) Second personal polite with { æra } ;

(iii) Second personal general with { ær } ;

(iv) Third personal with { æk } ;

Examples : momai, "my maternal uncle",
momaiæra, "your (polite) maternal uncle",

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[9] B. Kakati : *A. D. D.* §§ 54-55, and §§ 591-608.

momaiær, "your (general) meternal uncle",
momaiæk, "his maternal uncle", etc.

This inflection for personal relationship is a peculiar phenomenon so far as the Aryan languages are concerned, and it has been derived from the non-Aryan Austric sources. This class of nouns undergo case inflections like any other nouns of the general class.

The cases. There are six cases for the nouns : (i) the Absolute in [o], (ii) the Nominative in [e], (iii) the Accusative in [ɔk], (iv) the Dative in [ɔlŏi], (v) the Genitive in [ɔr] and (vi) the Locative in [ɔt]. The Absolute case has no overt markers and is syntactically used both as the subject or as the object. All other case morphemes lose their initial vowel when suffixed to nouns ending in vowels.

The Instrumental and the Ablative cases are expressed by the same syntactical post-positions like the pronouns.

Number and gender: There are no grammatical number and gender in Assamese. Plurality is expressed by the suffixes -bor, -bilak and -hɔ̄ in the Standard Colloquial, and by -gila, -gilan etc. in the Western Assamese dialects. Natural gender or sex is expressed by the derivatives like -a, in masculine and by -i, - ɔni, and -ni in feminine, or by descriptive words like mɔta, "male", and mati or maiki, "female", etc.

The enclitic and numeral definitives: The use of enclitics and numeral definitives is another very important distinguishing feature of the language. Enclitics are forms which express the nature, shape and form of the nominals to which they are suffixed. They cannot be called classifiers in the language since they do not classify the sound into any distinct groups or classes. Numeral definitives are enclitics or proclitics with a numeral prefixed to them. The numeral definitives are free forms while the enclitics are not. These forms express definiteness in man and things, and hence may be looked upon as the articles in English.

The following are a few of the very important definitives.

(i) -to : added to male beings including man (general, and not respectful), and after things round and oblong ; e.g. manuhto, "the man" ; kukurto, "the dog" ; ghɔrto, "the house" ; paharto, "the hill" ; etc. The dimunitive of this form is -ti.

(ii) -khɔn, added to things flat, wide and, may be, long ; e.g. kaporkhɔn, "the piece of cloth" ; nŏikhɔn, "the river" ; kitapkhɔn, "the book" ; also, ghɔrkhɔn, 'the family", etc. The dimunitive is khɔni.

(iii) -dal, added to things round and long ; e.g. pensildal, "the pencil" ; kathdal, "the piece of wood", etc.

(iv) -gɔraki, and (v) -zɔna are added to words for man and woman, and (vi) -zɔn for man only in respectful senses ; e.g. manuhgraki or manuhzɔn, "the man", tirotagɔraki, "the woman", (respectful)", etc.

(viii) -zɔni is added to female of both man and animal ; e.g. manuhzɔni, "woman (not respectful)" ; gŏruzɔni, "the cow", etc.

Examples of numeral definitives : ækhɔn kitap or kitap ækhɔn, "one book, (indefinite)" ; dugɔraki tirota, "two women" ; tirota dugɔraki, "the two women" ; sarihazar tɔka, "four thousand rupees", tɔka sarihazar, "the four thousand rupees" ; etc. From the above it has been clear that numeral definitive signify indefiniteness when it is followed by the noun, and definitenness of any expressed amount or number when preceded by the noun.[10]

The verbals : The verbals are inflected for finite and non-finite verbs. All finite verbs are inflected for four persons ; non-finite verbs have no personal inflections.

Finite verbs : The persons. The first personal morpheme is { ǒ } with a variant from in { m }. There are two Second persons, polite in { a }, and general in { ɔ } morphologically varying with { o } and { i }. The Third person has { e } with variants in { o } and { ɔ }.

The tenses and moods : There are three temporal morphemes : [is] for progressive, [il] for the past and [ib] for the future. The last two morphemes lose their vowel when they are added to bases ending in vowels.

The personal inflectional morphemes are suffixed to the stems composed of the verbal base plus the temporal morphemes. The verbal base itself is the present stem ; e.g. kɔr, "to do" ; kɔrǒ, "I do" kɔre, he (she, it, etc) does, kɔra you, polite, do, etc.

The base plus [is] form the present progressive stem ; e.g. kŏrisõ, "I am or have been doing", kŏrisɔ, "you, (general), are or have been doing", etc.

The past stem is formed by [il] ; e.g. kŏrilõ, "I did" ; kŏrile, "he (she, it etc) did", etc.

[is] precedes [il] in the past progressive stem ; e.g. kŏrisillõ, "I was or had been doing", kŏrisil, "he (she, it, etc.) was or had been doing", etc.

The base plus [ib] form the future stem ; e.g. kŏrim, "I shall do" ; kŏribɔ, "he, (she, it etc.) will do", etc. There is no inflection for future progressive.

The present stem functions as the Imperative stem as well. The Imperative Second person general has no inflectional markers ; e.g.

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[10] For use of the enclitics, read Kakati, *A. F. D.* §§ 573-590, and the footnote No. 3 in pp. 278-9 ; also read M. B. Emeneau : "India as a Linguistic Area" in the *Language*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 1-16, (1956).

Kɔr ! or tɔe kɔr !" You, general, do !" Pɔrh ! or tɔe pɔrh ! "You, general, read !" tumi kɔra ! "You, polite, do !" tumi pɔrha ! "You, polite, read ; etc. It has to be noted that unlike in English, the subject is also expressed in the Imperative in Assamese.

The non-finite verbs. The following are the non-finite verbs in the language ;

(i) the conjunctive in { i } and { e } ;
(ii) the infinitive in { ɔ } ; and
(iii) the past participle in { a }.

The conjunctive in { i } which is consequential in meaning, and the past participle in { a } are suffixed to the present stem, i.e. the bare base ; e.g. kŏri, "having done, doing" ; pŏrhi, "having read or reading" ; kɔra, "(which is or was already) done or the act of doing etc." ; pɔrha, "(which is or was already) read, the reading", etc.

The conjunctive in { e } may be suffixed to the past stem in { il } and the present participial stem in { ŏt } ; e.g. kŏrile, "if (it is) done" ; kɔrŏte, "while doing", etc.

The infinitive { ɔ } takes the future stem and the resultant form may have the Absolute, (as object), the Dative, the Ablative and the Genetive cases.

The negative : The negative inflection is obtained by prefixation of the negative morpheme { ne } to the already inflected forms. The vowel of the negative morpheme, which is lost before a form beginning with vowel, harmonizes with the first vowel following a consonant of the verbal form, except that with the vowel / a / it may remain unharmonized, e.g. nɔkɔrŏ, "I do not do" ; nŏkŏrilǒ, "I did not do" ; nædækhǒ, "I do not see" ; nuxunile, "he did not hear" ; nidila, "you, polite, did not give" ; but, nakhalŏ or nekhalǒ, "I did not eat" ; nazabi or nezabi, "you, general, don't go !," etc.[11]

The future negative in the Second persons expresses negative Imparative also.

The passive : It is expressed analytically. There are, however, remnants of inflected passives in { i } and { e } in a few idiomatic expressions.

The causatives, the denominatives, etc., are derived verbal bases and undergo the above inflections regularly.

4. 4. Word order : Normally an utterance starts with the subject which is followed by the object and terminated by the finite verb. All of the subject, the object and the finite verb may be preceded by their adjuncts. This normal word order may be altered in emphatic utterances in accordance with the nature of emphasis.

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[11] It is to be noted that the negative forms in *ne* and *na* are not free variants ; they are regarded as distinctive of some dialect style.

5. The Vocabulary : The largest percent of the Assamese words are *tadbhavas,* derived from Sanskrit through the Prakrit and Apabhraṁśa stages, besides a fairly large number of *tatsama,* semi-*tatsama* and *deśya* words. Assamese is an unorthodox and borrowing language, and has enriched its vocabulary by acquisition from almost all the non-Aryan tribal languages and dialects spoken in and around Assam. Other New Indo-Aryan languages specially Hindi, and through Hindi many other languages like Persian, Arabic, etc., have also contributed their share along with the European languages as English, Portuguese, etc. Some of the loan words have been assimilated and naturalized beyond recognition. With spread of knowledge and education in science and technology, and contact with foreign countries, words from foreign languages are almost daily creeping in and adding to the vitality of the language.

6. A note on the orthography : Assamese uses the exact counterpart of all the symbols in the Devanagari alphabet, both vowels and consonants. For consonants, there are a few more symbols in Assamese ; e.g., the symbols for ḍ, pronounced r ; ḍh, pron. rh ; y, pron. y, and *khandat ta,* pron. alveolar t.

The present Assamese orthography is similar to that of Bengali except for two characters. Unlike Bengali, Assamese symbol for one of the r / s has a bar in the middle while for / w / the bar occurs below the symbol.

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The Lasting Values of Sankaradeva's Teachings

By

H. V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

The fifteenth century A.D. witnessed the birth of new ideas leading to the rise of new religions, founded on the liberal doctrine of Bhakti, often of a revolutionary character such as India had witnessed in the sixth century B. C. It was an era of great spiritual upsurge throughout India. It saw the rise of a great progressive and democratic movement which laid emphasis on the unity of Godhead, stood against excessive ritualism, preached a faith based on constant devotion, fought against caste prejudices and stressed on the equality of man.[1] There appeared on the scene of religious history of various provinces a galaxy of spiritual leaders to carry the gospel of the new faith to the masses and to infuse in them a sense of unity and purpose. In Assam it was marked by the birth of the 'many-gifted' Śaṅkaradeva, an illustrious and noble son of Assam.

Śaṅkaradeva, the fountain-head of the Bhakti movement in Assam, has left a deep impress on Assamese culture and literature, on Assamese religion and way of life. He was a great genius, prophet and seer, in whom the whole of Assamese culture may be said to be epitomised. With his encyclopaedic knowledge, magnetic personality and brilliant power of exposition, he summed up in his long life of 120 years all that was good in the known past. Even after four centuries of his passing away the essentials of his preaching are not only not exhausted, but are ever on the increase.

Śaṅkaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. and lived on earth for a life-time of 120 years. He lost his mother three days after his birth and was brought up by his grand-mother. At the age of 23 he married a Kāyastha girl, Sūryavatī, who died four years after her marriage leaving a girl. Śaṅkaradeva lived in looking after the motherless girl and after her marriage and in his zeal for the faith he had discovered, he undertook an extensive tour which must have extended for a period of twelve years. During this sojourn, he visited places like Gayā, Purī, Vṛindāvana, Mathurā, Dwārakā, Varāhakuṇḍa, Ayodhyā and Badarikāśrama. After he returned home, he married a second time and, by this marriage, had three sons.

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[1] *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, p.65.

Even as a boy, Śaṅkaradeva exhibited qualities of an erudite scholar. He was a prolific writer and had deep knowledge of the *Vedas,* the *Vedānta,* the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa.* In order to give a permanent basis to his teachings he created a vast religious literature. The unique feature of his works is that he wrote all of them in the vernacular. He handled all branches of literature to fulfil the demands of the people. He was not only the author of works of original thinking, but was also an expert in translating from Sanskrit. He rendered into music, poetry and drama the entire life-story of Kṛṣṇa. The result was the great output of literature in various branches of learning such as *Kāvya,* theology, etc. As has been pointed out by Dr B. K. Barua "The writings of Śaṅkaradeva had been, for the last few centuries, a source of delight, inspiration and wisdom to the Assamese people. He contributed a good deal to the development of the Assamese language, to the widening of the imaginative range of Assamese literature. He raised it to the classical elegance and richness by imparting into it what is good and beautiful in Sanskrit."

Before Śaṅkaradeva's time, the religious life of Assam was far from satisfactory. It was an age of tantricism which is characterised by the worship of Divine Energy in the female form called by many names such as Kāli, Durgā, etc. It combined many elements of ancient superstitions as well as ingenious magic. Śaṅkaradeva was not at all happy to find the general mentality of the people as hopelessly degraded, being selfish, eager for royal favour and averse to religion or culture. To put it differently, the atmosphere of Kāmarūpa was surcharged with worldliness. Thus the emendation of the prevalent religious and social abuses became Śaṅkaradeva's first concern and consideration.

Śaṅkaradeva was a monotheist and he preached a religion of supreme surrender to the One and, therefore, his creed is known as *ekaśaraṇanāma-dharma.* In *ekaśaraṇa dharma,* there is only one God, Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, and there is none else other than the One. The worship of other gods and goddesses are strictly prohibited. According to Śaṅkaradeva, the Supreme God is Kṛṣṇa, who is the saviour of all. Thus Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhakti-pradīpa* :

> Devote yourself to me with a single mind,
> Forsake from a distance all other gods.
> Surrender yourself to me alone,
> Devote to me, then will you be fit for salvation.
> Never listen to the glorification of other gods
> So that your devotion may remain unsullied.[2]

Śaṅkaradeva is of the view that if Kṛṣṇa is worshipped all other gods are worshipped. So he says : "As the branches, leaves and foliage of a tree are nourished by pouring water only at the root of the tree, as limbs of the body are nourished by pouring food only in the stomach, so all gods and goddesses are propitiated only by the worship of Kṛṣṇa."[3] Śaṅkaradeva upheld the philosophy of oneness in all. He comprehended one God, Kṛṣṇa, one service, the service of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Brahman.

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[2] B. K. Barua, *Sankaradeva Vaisnava Saint of Assam,* p. 10.

This religion knew no caste, creed or colour, and a universal spirit is the main principle of this faith. Śaṅkaradeva knew that brahmanical pretensions have raised a barrier between man and God, and so both by pen and from the pulpit he endeavoured to break down all prejudices of caste, creed and rank. His teachings embrace the lowliest of the lowly. In *Kīrtana-ghoṣā* he says :

nāhi bhakatita jāti ajāti vichār
Kṛṣṇata bhakati samastare adhikār.

"In Bhakti there is no distinction of castes, everybody has equal right to chant the Hari-nāma."[4] He simplified religion to such an extent that even the most ignorant and the humblest of all could join religious worship. *Mahāpuruṣīyā dharma* is another name for this faith, because Śaṅkaradeva's object of worship, the all pervasive, Parama Brahman, to whom devotee is to take shelter, is so described in the *Bhāgavata.* It had universal appeal, and, therefore, people of all castes could embrace it.

It is as a social reformer that Śaṅkaradeva stands out more prominently. In this respect, the messages of Śaṅkaradeva recall to our mind some of the concepts of the modern period like the Community Development, Adult Education and the Panchayat Raj. This naturally leads us to the closer examination of some of these concepts.

The term Community Development is used only to describe the methods by which the people who live in local villages or communities become involved in helping to improve their own economic and social conditions and thereby become effective groups in the programmes of national development. Writing about the precept and practice of the community development, Mr. Cousins observed that community development goes forward on the assumption that the greatest resource of any developing country is its people, a position held by Śaṅkaradeva also. It is distinguished also by the clear assumption that the basic unit of development will be the community. It is based, as well, upon recognition of the fact that the small community is one of the two social groups which are universal in human societies. Another distinctive characteristic of the community development is that its methods and approach proceed from the principle basic to modern social work of helping people to themselves.

Thus "the values upon which the community development rests are clear : A fundamental belief in the work of human being ; respect for individual ; a conviction that people can and should determine their own destinies ; and a realisation that we should work to achieve these conditions in which each person will have the opportunity to develop his personalities fully, thus enriching society."

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[3] B. Kakati, *Sankara Deva,* p. 40.
[4] H. M. Das, *Srimanta Sankaradeva,* p. 31.

A deep and dispassionate study of Śaṅkaradeva's teachings reflects more or less the same ideals described above. It may be noted here that as every institution of society grows out of its own peculiar soil and nurtured by its own unique climate and environment, the ideal of the development of society as envisaged by Śaṅkaradeva has its own distinctive characteristics. Śaṅkaradeva attached great importance to dignity of labour and respect for individual. There are many anecdotes which amply testify to our statement. It was the ideal of Śaṅkaradeva that one should not employ mean tactics to achieve one's end. The following anecdote brings out the truth of the same in full measure.

It is said that a meat hawker once came up to the place of Śaṅkaradeva's disciples and offered meat for sale. On seeing the hawker, the bhaktas said that the meat was taboo with them and asked him to go away. But the hawker requested them to purchase at least half a seer of meat so as to make provision for feeding his hungry children at home. On overhearing the conversation, Śaṅkaradeva called the hawker to his side and said ; "Dear child, it is not right and proper to eke out a living by killing animals, however strained one may be. Earn your livelihood by some peaceful means. Give up this bad profession. Here I give you twenty-five rupees, take it, go home and purchase a pair of bullocks and other accessories and then take to ploughing." Being pleased with the advice of the master, the hawker bowed to him, took the money and left the place. On his way back, he thought about his profession in the new light. Being full of patience, he threw away the basket of meat to the birds and resolved to give up his old profession and take up the new one. He returned to the Master once more, made a confession and desired to be initiated. This was done and the vendor became a devoted disciple.[5] We can multiply such instances, but the space precludes us from further quoting.

Even the chanting of the name of God had the same desire. Even to this day, one can see in the sattras the *Hari-prasaṅgas* where people belonging to different castes join without any distinction of caste, creed or colour. This was intended mainly to establish harmony in society and to promote fellow-feeling.

Attending the *prasaṅgas* at the appointed time and chanting the name of God to the accompaniment of musical instruments were intended to discipline the mind of the individual. Discipline is the great criterion which actually nurses determination and resolution which are in turn necessary to develop one's own potentialities, thereby enriching society.

Śaṅkaradeva knew that the development of society depended upon the education of the people and their active participation in matters affecting them most. His main concern was to mould the character and life of the people. This he achieved by drawing the attention of the multitudes to religious as well as ethical literature. He translated the *Bhāgavata* and other Sanskrit texts into the Assamese language so that the common man might read and understand them. He also introduced one-Act plays based on religious themes to educate the ignorant. In his first drama, *Cinhayātrā,* he himself painted on large canvas scenes of Vaikuṇṭha to infuse into the minds of the people a sense of religious consciousness, on the one hand, and a sense of devoted service for the progress of humanity on the other. Thus he used paintings as a popular means of communication that could be understood by the illiterate and even children.

To porpagate his cult, Śaṅkaradeva established the institution of sattras. These sattras contributed immensely to the socio-religious development of Assam. He also established the institution of nāmghars as central religious institution in the village, which, as Dr B. Kakati observes, "combined the functions of a village parliament, a village court, a village school and a village church. These institutions served as sheet anchors of Assamese society in the midst of continually shifting political circumstances." The nāmghars "worked to a large extent towards spread of intellectual and cultural activities in the village, and in the course of time being nerve-centres of the village came to co-ordinate all aspects of social, economical and political life of the Assamese people. . . . The nāmghars further serve as panchayat-hall, where villagers gather to discuss and solve many of their day-to-day problems. These community centres have been found even to play political and religious role."[5] Indeed, these institutions performed the same functions of the Panchayats of which we hear so much to day.

In summary : It can be said that never before in Assam, was a religion propagated by a single individual which comprehends all the aspects of religion. At a time when people used to leap at tangent of anything non-material, Śaṅkaradeva underlined the fact that human life has a spiritual fringe of its own ; and man can afford to ignore this fringe at his peril. On a passage of gloom, Śaṅkaradeva's message shone like the brilliance of a mid-day sun and here is light which has passed through the corridor of five centuries and still gives hope and inspiration to the common man in Assam.

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[5] B. K. Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

The Sayings of Dak

By

D. C. SIRCAR

A large number of pithy sayings in Bengali verse are attributed to Ḍāk (or Ḍākpuruṣ) and Khanā. They look like proverbs primarily meant for agriculturist householders, although many of them are of general interest. The aphorisms generally relate to astrology and meteorology.

Collections of Khanā's sayings, which are more popular in Bengal than Ḍāk's, have often been published, and there are many editions in the market. The aphorisms of Ḍāk in Bengali have also been collected and published by several persons. Most of the sayings attributed to Ḍāk and Khanā have been quoted by S. K. De in his *Bāṅglā Pravād* (Bengali Proverbs) which contains an exhaustive bibliography. For a discussion on these aphorisms, one may consult D. C. Sen's *Baṅgabhāṣā o Sāhitya* (Bengali Language and Literature), N. N. Vasu's Bengali *Viśvakoṣa* (Encyclopædia), A. Bhattacharya's *Bāṅglā Loksāhitya* (Bengali Folk-literature), etc.

Similar sayings are popular in Assam and Mithilā (North Bihar), where, however, they are attributed to Ḍāk alone, there being no place for Khanā in the local traditions. A collection of Ḍāk's sayings in Assamese has been recently published by D. Datta who has appended to his work a good bibliography on the subject. The topic has also been discussed in works like Maheswar Neog's *Asamiyā Sāhityar Rūparekhā* (Outline of Assamese Literature), etc. A large number of Ḍāk's sayings in Maithilī have been quoted by J. Christian in his *Behar Proverbs* published in 1891.

It will be seen that, out of the three territories of Eastern India, the aphorisms are divided between Ḍāk and Khanā only in Bengal. Many of the Bengali sayings of Khanā are, however, in their Assamese and Maithilī forms, attributed to Ḍāk in Assam and North Bihar. Even in Bengal, Durgabati Mukhopadhyay attributed the majority of Khanā's aphorisms to Ḍāk in his *Ḍāk Puruṣer Kathā* (The Sayings of Dāk Puruṣ) published in 1904. In S. K. De's *Bāṅglā Pravād* also, two of the popular proverbs (Nos. 6122 and 7981) are represented as attributed to both Ḍāk and Khanā. These facts probably suggest that, in Bengal also, the sayings were originally assigned to a single astrologer but that were divided between two of them only after the development of distinct legends regarding the latter. In different parts of Northern India, as we shall see below, the aphorisms are represented as the sayings of a single astrologer or as the address of one astrologer to another. Amongst a number of Khanā's sayings, while some are attributed to Varāha or Mihira, some others are represented as the sayings of Rāvaṇa. Of course, as is the case with the sayings in the other languages, most of the aphorisms have no reference to their author.

There has been some discussion on the meaning of *Khanā* and *Ḍāk* although the representation of the persons so named in Bengali tradition respectively as a female and male astrologer has shadowed the real meanings of the words. In our opinion, *Khanā* is derived from Sanskrit *Kṣaṇada*=Prakrit *Khanā*, meaning an astrologer, while *Ḍāk* may be taken to mean 'a proclamation' (from its common meaning 'a shout, cry or call') and *Ḍākpurush* 'an announcer of proclamations'. As we shall see below, there is reason to believe that Ḍāk and Khanā could not have been personal names. As regards Ḍāk, A. Bhattacharya thinks that it was a name applied to a class of tantric Buddhist teachers. It is, however, difficult to accept the suggestion, since, as we shall see later, Ḍāk's sayings are popular even in areas where tantric Buddhist influence never spread.

Similar aphorisms are current in Uttar Pradesh where they are attributed not to Ḍāk but to Ghāgh. In reality, however, the Hindi word *Ghāgh* means 'a clever old or wise man.' There has been some discussion on Ghāgh's sayings, a recent publication being an article in the *Statesman*, Calcutta dated the 20th August, 1964. Some of these aphorisms refer to Bhaḍrī, and these have close relation to Ḍāk's sayings as prevalent in Rajasthan. The Rājasthāni legends regarding Ḍāk and his wife, again, throw welcome light on the Bengal tradition about Khanā.

According to Bengali folklore, the female astrologer Khanā was the wife of Mihira who was the son of Varāha, the astronomer at the court of King Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī. All this is imaginary, King Vikrama of Indian tradition being unknown to genuine history. Of course the celebrated astronomer Varāhamihira flourished in the Ujjayinī region in West Malwa during the sixth century A. D., and it is his name that has been at the root of the iamginary 'Mihira son of Varāha'. We shall see below that such fabrications are also known from other parts of India. It has to be noted that nothing can be more absurd than the conception of the daughter-in-law of a sixth century astronomer of Malwa composing aphorisms in the Bengali language. The historical value of the legends about Ḍāk is no better.

There are divergent traditions about Ḍāk in Eastern India. In Bengal and North Bihar, Ḍāk is said to have belonged to the milkman community while, in Assam, he is supposed to have been a potter of Lehi Daṅgarā, the modern village of Lauhagāon about seven miles to the south of Barpeṭā in the Kamrup district. It is said that the potter girl, who was

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barren, received a boon from Mihira, an astronomer of Ujjayinī, and gave birth to Ḍāk. But one of the Assamese aphorisms represents Ḍāk as a member of the Brāhmaṇa community. Such disparity no doubt goes against the genuineness of the legends. Moreover, if Ḍāk was a historical personage, then his sayings must have been composed in a single regional language of India. But, as we shall see below, Ḍāk's sayings are popular even in Rajasthan in Western India far away from the said three territories of Eastern India.

A large number of Ḍāk's sayings in Rajasthan have been quoted by Jagdish Singh Gahlot in his *Rājasthānī Krishikahā Vateṁ*. Just as this Rajasthani Ḍāk is unknown to the writers of East India, Gahlot was unware of the existence of Ḍāk's sayings in Eastern India. It may be mentioned here that Rajasthan's Ḍāk can scarcely be regarded as a Tantric Buddhist teacher, since Tantrik Buddhism never spread in that area.

Some of the Rajasthani aphorisms published by Gahlot are represented as addressed to Bhaḍli or Bhaḍḍalī by Ḍaṅk. There is no doubt that this *Ḍāṅk* is the same as *Ḍāk* of East India. It is well-known that Hindi and the allied languages generally represent *Ḍākinī* as *Ḍāṅkinī*. Moreover, the astrologers of the Ḍākot community of Rajasthan claim to be the desendants of Ḍaṅk, though Ḍākot really stands for *Ḍākaputra* as Gahlot for *Guhilaputra*. Of course, it is difficult to say whether the name Ḍaṅk has anything to do with *daṅkā* (a drum). But we know that proclamations were made in ancient and medieval India by the beat of drums.

According to the Rajasthani tradition, Ḍaṅk (Ḍāk) was a Brāhmaṇa who flourished in the age of King Parīkṣita of the *Mahābhārata*. He was a sound mathematician and astrologer and was the husband of Sāvitrī, daughter of the great physician Dhanvantari. Another name of their Sāvitri was Bhaḍli or Bhaḍḍalī who was herself a great astrologer. It is further said that Ḍaṅk (Ḍāk) was the son of Varāhamihira, the court astronomer of King Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī. Of course the contemporaneity of Parīkṣita, Dhanvantari and Varāhamihira is as absurd as the Bengal legend ascribing Bengali aphorisms to the pen of Varāha's daughter-in-law. But what is of considerable importance is the fact that the female astrologer who is supposed to have been the daughter-in-law of the great astronomer of West Malwa is called Khanā in Bengal and Bhaḍli or Bhaḍḍali in Rajasthan. We have seen above that *Khanā* really means 'an astrologer'. There is reason to believe that Bhaḍli or Bhaḍḍalī also means the same thing. Bhaḍli (Bhaḍḍalī) is the name of the astrologer community of Rajasthan, also called Ḍākot, Gurḍe, Thavariyā, Śanichariyā, Diśantari and Joshi (Jyotiṣī). The same community name is found in Uttar Pradesh as *Bhaduri* or *Bhaddari* (*Bhadri*). Thus the masculine words *Khanā* and *Bhaḍlī*, etc., meaning 'an astrologer', were popularly conceived as the names of a female astrologer married to Varāha's son called Mihira in Bengal and Ḍaṅk (Ḍāk) in Rajasthan, the same as Ghāgh of Uttar Pradesh.

We are quoting below the aphorisms mentioning Ḍaṅk (Ḍāk) and Bhaḍlī (Bhaḍḍalī) from Gahlot's work.

1. *Parbhāte geh ḍambrā sāñje sīlā bāv*
   Ḍaṅk kahai he Bhaḍḍalī kalā taṇā subhāv.

Ḍaṅk says to Bhaḍḍalī, Clouds flying in the morning and cold winds blowing in the evening are sure signs of famine.

2. *Ūgantero māchhlo āthaṁvtero mokh*
   Ḍaṅk kahai he Bhaḍlī nadvāṁchaḍhsi gokh.

Ḍaṅk says, O Bhadlī, rainbow at sunrise and red rays of setting sun angur the overflooding of rivers.

3. *Sāvaṇ pahilī pañeamī jhīnī chhāṇṭ paḍai*
   Ḍaṅk kahai he Bhaḍlī saphlāṁ rūṁkh phalai.

Ḍaṅk says to Bhaḍli, If there are showers of rain on the fifth day of the dark half of the month of Sāvaṇ, the fruit-bearing trees will produce excessively.

4. *Poh sabimal pekhje Chait nirmal chand*
   Ḍaṅk kahe he Bhaḍlī maṇ hūtaṁ an mand.

Ḍaṅk says, If the sky is thickly clouded during the whole month of Posh but is cloudless in the bright half of Chait, O Bhaḍli, grain will sell cheaper than a maund per Rupee.

5. *Bhādarve jag relsī chhat anurādhā hoy*
   Ḍaṅk kahai he Bhaḍlī karo na chintā koy.

Ḍaṅk says to Bhaḍlī, If it rains all over the country in the month of Bhādon and if there be Anurādhā *nakṣatra* on the sixth day of that month, do not be anxious for the failure of crops.

6. *Chitrā dīpak Chetve Svātī Govardhan*
   Ḍaṅk kahe he Bhaḍḍalī athag nīpje ann.

Ḍaṅk says, O Bhaḍlī, if the Dīvālī festival falls in the Chitrā *nakṣatra* and there be Śvātī *nakṣatra* when Govardhan is worshipped in the following morning, there will be plentiful crops.

7. *Dīvā bītī pañcamī Som Śukar Guru Mūl*
   Ḍaṅk kahe he Bhaḍlī nipje sātūṁ tūl.

Ḍaṅk says to Bhaḍli, If on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Kāti, after the Dīvālī, the Mūlā *nakṣatra* falls on Monday, Friday or Thursday, the crops will be plentiful.

8. *Sukarvārrī bādrī rahī Sanīsar chhāy*
   Ḍaṅk kahe he Bhaḍlī barsyā binā nā jāy.

Daṅk says, O Bhaḍlī, if clouds appear in the sky on Friday and remain there till Saturday, it will not disappear without raining.

9. *Māh Maṅgal Jeth Ravī Bhādarvai San hoy*
Ḍaṅk kahe he Bhaḍlī birlā jīvai koy.

Ḍaṅk says to Bhaḍlī, if there be five Tuesdays in the month of Māgh, or five Sundays in the month of Jeṭh, or five Saturdays in the month of Bhādon, then so severe will the famine be that few people will survive.

10. *Somāṁ Śukrāṁ Surgurāṁ je chando ūgant*
Ḍaṅk kahai he Bhaḍlī jal thal ek karant.

Ḍaṅk says, O Bhaḍli, if the new moon in the month of Āṣāḍh falls on Monday, Friday or Thursday, there will be heavy showers of rain.

If one assiduously collects all the aphorisms in the regional languages, attributed to Ḍāk (Ḍaṅk), Ghāgh, Khanā, etc., and attempts a comparative study of the entire material, it will indeed be a very valuable contribution.

The Miltary System of the Ahoms

By

S. K. BHUYAN

The military system of the Āhoms derived its efficiency from the maximum utilisation of all the resources of the country—its man-power, its economic strength, its strategic advantages, the religious sentiments of the people, and even their superstitions. They also took into account the peculiar features of hostile organisations, the strong and weak points of the enemy, and moulded their war-methods accordingly. The system thus developed enabled the rulers to expand a small state on the Dihing and the Dikhow into an extensive dominion spreading from the confines of Śadiyā to the river Mānāhā—a territory of 500 miles in length and an average of 60 miles in breadth, with a fighting strength of 2,40,000 adult male effectives.

In the long course of their rule in Assam the Āhoms had frequently to confront organised attacks from the west, and incursions of the tribesmen from the northern, southern and eastern borders. With the help of an organisation based on perpetual vigilance and preparedness, and diplomacy of a very high order, the Āhoms maintained their sway over the Brahmaputra Valley in an almost uninterrupted manner for six hundred years; and successive generals of the invading forces—Āfghān, Mogul and Burmese—expressed their unstinted admiration of the fighting mettle of the Assamese, their versatility, and their ability to shrink their differences in the face of a national ordeal. It was these redeeming features that led Lord William Bentinck to observe,—"The fact that the ancient government (of the Āhoms) continued for six centuries indicated that there must be something intrinsically good in the constitution."

The Āhoms had conquered Assam by the force of arms, and consolidated their authority by supplementing the basic military prowess by a policy of appeasement and endearment, in order to keep the subdued races in constant dread of punishment for intransigence, and in expectation of rewards for loyalty and co-operation. As for the rulers promotions and honours were awarded on the solitary basis of valorous deeds in the battlefield and signal achievements in the administrative and diplomatic spheres. A bridegroom, at the time of his marriage with a princess of blood royal was reminded of the patriotic exploits of his ancestors or of himself, in recognition of which he was now honoured with relationship with the royal family. This militaristic bias was deeply rooted in Āhom traditions, and the earliest Shān rulers Khunlung and Khunlāi, when leaving their homeland in Yunnan, were given a sword—the famous *heṅgdān*—which brought about the subjugation of a people in whatever direction it was turned.

The Āhom conquerors and their descendants, and the specially favoured members of their race constituted the steel frame of the military system, and minor commands were given to non-Āhoms only in the last few decades of their rule. The officers and men were organised for the dual purpose of service in the civil administration and employment in war. In peace times the villagers pursued their normal avocations, only one-fourth of them being ordinarily liable to serve under the state. The adult males were registered as state *pāiks*, who were in turn grouped into squads or *goṭs* of three or four men. Ordinarily, one man from each *goṭ* was required to serve the state, and his work in the village, both in the field and his orchard, was carried on by his home-keeping comrades. In times of an emergency, two men and even three were pressed into state service. Dr John Peter Wade's observation "that the military commander and the judge are united in the same person" are equally applicable to the populace —the registered *pāiks*—in the sense that they served as labourers in times of peace and as soldiers in times of war. A ready militia was thus available for speedy mobilisation ; and the *pāiks* with their graded commanders —the Phukans, Rājkhowās, Baruās, Hazarikās, Śaikiās and Barās— marched to the training centres or directly to the battlefield at a short notice. Supplies were also guaranteed as cultivation of paddy and other stuffs was unimpaired under this system, though the incidence of war imposed a heavier burden on the home-keeping *pāiks*. The co-operation of the tribesmen was an asest of the highest value in the war-operations of the Āhoms.

To meet the requirements of an abnormal situation like war the whole energy of the nation was pitched to the fulfilment of a single purpose. The production of materials—war equipments and food provisions— was carried on a more vigorous footing. The dockyards and arsenals became more active ; and smithies were established even in the palace enclosures where muskets, cannon, swords, spears and arrow-heads were made under the direct supervision of the king who also directed the training and manoeuver of the recruits. It is also recorded that to meet an emergent situation cultivation of crops was carried on under rigorous pressure from the government. The personality of a monarch and his officers was the *primum mobile* for success in war, and this fact was fully realised by the Āhoms as we know from the advice of a minister offered in the war-council of King Rudra Singha,—"In the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha there was an abundance of provisions and men ; and still he acquired the title of 'the deserting king'. Arms and ammunition, materials and supplies are torpid and impotent ; the followers and subordinates of the king are symbols of life and animation; they alone can infuse into the immobile war-provisions a dynamic force".

The espionage system of the Āhoms was highly efficient, and the spies supplied constant information about the designs of the neighbours or resources of the enemy. The Moguls had to ply their boats upstream, and the progress of their march was necessarily slow. The Āhoms took advantage of the interval, gained additional time by despatching emissaries to the invading generals under thousand-and-one pretexts, and meanwhile perfected their own preparations. The invaders, naturally unwilling to enter into a practically unknown territory like Assam, would be deluded by any bait to attain their objectives by peaceful negotiations if possible. The interval would also be used by the Assamese in hurling bluffs about their invincibility and the sure defeat of the enemy. On one occasion a Mogul general swallowed a bluff that there were Rākṣasas or demons in the Assamese camp. The Āhoms appointed very astute and intelligent Brahmans as emissaries, and their representations, consisting of half-truths and exaggerations, mystified the Mogul commanders with the result that in many cases they become dispirited and entertained dubious hopes of success against Assam.

The topography of Assam dictated its methods of warfare. The trained cavalry of the Moguls were too much of a match for the Āhoms, and they, therefore, avoided open encounters in the plains. Guerilla tactics consisting ambushes and sudden attacks constituted their principal *modus operandi*. Their commando soldiers entered into hostile camps during the still hours of the night when they carried off the treasures or gagged the muzzles of the guns kept ready for action next day. The Āhoms studied Mogul strategy very carefully, including the details of Mogul engagements in other parts of India. They knew that the latter hours of the night were very suitable for attacking the Moguls as they fell fast asleep at that time. Śivājī's successes against the Moguls in 1665 encouraged the Āhom king Chakradhwaj Singha to speed up his preparations to recover Gauhati. The Assamese soldier was the master of a variety of skills which he had acquired as a cultivator and a householder. The erection of hedge-fencing, rowing, swimming digging and house-construction constituted the normal occupation of an Assamese cultivator, and this varied knowledge was brought to bear upon his military career. This versatility amazed the Mogul general, Rājā Rām Singha of Amber, and he exclaimed at the conclusion of the hostilities,—"Every Assamese solider is an expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding muskets and guns. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India".

The food menu of an Assamese soldier was extremely simple. He had in his kit a bag of specially prepared raw rice, soaked in water—*komal chāul* as it is called,—and he thrust morsels into his mouth from time to time and thereby satisfied his alimentary need. The Āhoms also used a

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kind of peripatetic oven : cooking vessels were suspended from a bamboo pole, and appointed men while running or walking fast held a constant fire beneath to boil the contents. This simplicity was in marked contrast with the culinary elaboratiness of the Moguls.

The hills of Assam offered ready-made sites for fortifications. The hills on both banks of the Brahmaputra near Tezpur were capped with forts which caused wonder even to the veteran general Mīr Jumlā. The mountains in the neighbourhood of Gauhati were similarly fortified and linked with each other by ramparts erected in the intervening plains. A well-armed soldier was posted at an interval of nine to fifteen feet, and guns were mounted at advantageous points. The hills of Gauhati, thus fortified, constituted an impregnable wall of resistance, and the Assamese army could fight within the Gauhati enclosures "as if sitting in their own homes", to quote the words of General Lāchit Barphukan.

It is not possible to give a full idea of the Āhom military system within the compass of a few pages. The system was highly successful and it enabled the Āhoms to maintain their sway over Assam for such a length of time. A Muslim historian, Muhammad Kāzim, admitted that "the Rājās of Assam had curbed the ambition and checked the conquests of the most victorious princes of Hindustan ; the solution of a war against them has baffled the penetration of heroes who have been styled Conquerors of the World". Mīr Jumlā's chronicler, Shihābuddin Tālish, who was with the general in his Assam campaign, wrote in the same vein,—"Every army that entered the limits of this country made its exit from the realm of Life ; every caravan that set foot on this land deposited its baggage of residence in the halting-place of Death". Lāchit Barphukan's antagonist Ram Singha had to exclaim,—"Glory to the king, glory to the counsellors, glory to the commanders, glory to the country ! One single individual leads all the forces ! Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not found any loop-hole and opportunity !" An Englishman, writing a few decades ago, paid the highest compliment to the mettle of the Assamese army when he said,—"The Assamese were to the Moslems what the Numidians and Mauritanians were to the old Romans—*genus insuperbile bello*".*

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* The great historian and man of letters, Dr S. K. Bhuyan was to have contributed a paper to the present volume on such subject as historical studies in Assam. But Death took him away from us on 5 July 1964. This neat piece of his writing has been taken from his *Studies in the History of Assam*, presently to be published through the kind courtesy of his wife Srimati Laksheswari Bhuyan.—EDITOR

The Archæological Wealth of Assam

By

P. D. CHAUDHURY

Assam is a part of the country known in ancient times as Prāgjyotiṣa. By this name the country was known in the great epics—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* as well as in some of the principal purāṇas.

The *Kālikā-purāṇa,* a work of the 10th century A.D., gives an etymological explanation of the name Prāgjyotiṣapura : "Formerly, Brahmā, the creator of this universe, staying here created the stars ; so the city is called Prāgjyotiṣapura, a city equal to the city of Indra." According to Gait *prāg* means former or eastern and *jyotiṣa,* a star, astrology, shining. Prāgjyotiṣapura may be taken to mean the City of Eastern Astrology. The name of the capital of Prāgjyotiṣa was Prāgjyotiṣapura which is indentical with the present-day Gauhati. The explanation given by Gait is corroborated by the facts that to the immediate east of Gauhati there is a temple on the Citrācala Hills, and that this temple is dedicated to the Navagrahas or the nine planets. It iis probable that this temple is the origin of the name, Prāgjyotiṣpura.

In former times Assam was also known as Kāmārūpa. In epigraphic records the name Kāmarūpa is first mentioned in the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta in the fourth century A.D. In Classical Sanskrit literature both Prāgjyotiṣapura and Kāmarūpa occur as alternative names of the country.

Both the *Kālikā-purāṇa* and the *Yogini-tantra* give a fairly detailed account of the country. The *Kālika-purāṇa* says that Kāmarūpa is to the east of the Karotoyā river. According to the *Yoginī-tantra* the country lying to the east of the Karatoyā as far as the pīṭha of Dikkaravāsinī is called Kāmarūpa. It is triangular in shape and a hundred yojanas in length, thirty yojanas in breadth.

The name Kāmarūpa according to the puranic legends is associated with Kāmadeva, the god of love. It is here that Kāma was sent by the gods to put an end to Śiva's mourning after the death of his consort, Satī, in Dakṣayajña and to awaken in him again the passion for creation. He was burnt to ashes by the fire that flashed out of his eyes on Śiva's forehead, but later regained his original form (rūpa), and hence the name Kāmarūpa.

The name Assam is of recent origin. There are different interpretations with regard to this name. One interpretation of this name is that it is an offshoot of a Sanskrit word *asama,* which means unparalleled or peerless. It is said that this word was used to describe the invincible might of the Āhoms who invaded this country in the first part of thirteenth century (1228 A.D.) from across the Pāṭkāi range. But the scientific and generally accepted interpretation seems to be that the word 'Assam' is a transformation of the word *Sam* (or *ham* in Ahom) a species or a group of people originated from the Shan or the Siamese who called themselves Thai or Tai.

Assam is a rich field for research and almost every place of this State abounds in objects of historical and antiquarian interest. It was in April 1912 that a research society named Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti or Assam Research Society was established at Gauhati to carry on researches in matters relating to history and archæology. Owing to the devotion and untiring efforts of some selfless workers, this society made rapid progress in historical and archælogical collections and within a short time formed the nucleus of a museum which was the first and formost object of the Samiti. The Assam State Museum is thus the offspring of the Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti. This antiquarian research society actually came into being on the 7th April 1912 with only twelve members. The devotion of the selfless workers and sympathisers placed this Samiti on par with other similar institutions in India. Within its limited scope and space, this premier organisation housed an excellent assortment of archæological articles. The Government as well as the public contributed towards its growth and development and articles of historical and antiquarian interest got stored up and preserved in the premises of the Samiti. Thus the Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti is the parent institute of archæological and historical research and formed the nucleus of a museum in the State of Assam. The fond hope of this Society of establishing a provincial museum at the ancient and historic town of Prāgjyotiṣapura (Gauhati) materialised in the year 1940, and this museum, now known as Assam State Museum, has grown up to be reckoned as a multi-purpose one.

The Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti infused the first impulse in the field of archæological research in Assam, and in this connection, the services of the late Rai Bahadur K. L. Barua, founder-editor of the *Journal of the Assam Research Society* must be recalled. He edited the journal for several years with rare distinction. The first issue of the journal came to light in April 1933 with quite a few articles of archæological, historical and literary importance.

The Assam Ancient Monuments and Records Act 1959 provides for the preservation and protection of ancient and historical monuments and records in Assam other than those declared by or unedr law made by Parliament to be of National Importance. As a corollary, the State Department of Archæology has come into being in 1961. This paper is written with a view to introducing to the readers some of the archæological wealth of the State which abounds in places of historical, art, and architectural monuments.

A good number of sites and monuments throughout the length and breadth of the State of Assam have now been exposed to view with their archæological and historical significance brought to light. Reference has been made here only to a few of them.

Assam is proud of her ancient treasures. She is fairly rich in her archæological wealth. Old sculptures, architectural remains, stone and copper inscriptions have come to light. But it is unfortunate that no concrete numismatic evidence of our ancient kings, prior to the Āhom ruler, Suklenmuṅg (1539-1552 A.D.), has yet come to light. This does not mean that our ancient kings did not have their own coins. If we go back to the seventh century A.D. we see that Bhāskaravarman was at that time the supreme lord over a vast eastern empire. He was a friend and ally of Śrī-Harṣa, the great emperor of Northern India. The art of melting metals and impressing seals on clay or melted metals was known in his times as evinced by his Nalanda seal and copperplate inscriptions. Gold and copper could be obtained within the kingdom. So this mighty king must have struck coins of his own. In the Silimpur stone slab inscription of the time of Jayapāla (1115-1125 A.D.), the last king of the Brahmapāla dynasty of Assam, it is mentioned that the king (Jayapāla) offered to make a large gift of gold equal to his own weight (tulāpuruṣa) to a learned Brahmin, Prahāsa by name, over and above 900 gold coins. This proves that this Kāmarūpa king minted coins of gold if not also of silver and copper, though unfortunately no such coins have yet been discovered. The inscription of Ratnapāla mentions the existence of a copper mine within the kingdom which the king worked with profit. Ratnapāla might have issued copper coins.

Although coins of Āhom kings prior to Suklenmuṅg, as stated above. have not been discovered as yet, historical evidences are there that as early as the fourteenth century A.D., Sudāṅgphā alias Bāmuṇī Kōwar (1397-1407 A.D.), struck coins in his own name on his accession to the throne. Since then the practice has grown with subsequent monarchs of issuing coins while ascending the coronation building known as the *siṅgarighar*, which contained a throne of gold for the new monarch to occupy. So the credit of minting the first Āhom coins goes to Sudāṅgphā and not to Suklenmuṅg as opined by A. W. Botham who might have based his opinion on the view of Sir Edward Gait.

The finest and oldest specimen of sculptural or iconoplastic art in Assam is the temple stone door-frame at Dah-Parvatīā in the district of Darrang (Central Assam). Its carving is characteristic of the style of the early Gupta schools of sculpture, the two goddess, Gaṅgā and Yamunā,

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stand with garlands in hands in artistic and elegant posture. The door jambs are decorated with beautiful ornamental foliage. The artist's sense of proportion, the beautiful symmetry of the figures and ornamental devices, and the excellence of execution tend to prove that this door-frame belongs to the same period as the great schools of sculpture which existed at Pāṭaliputra and Vārāṇasī in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

The rock inscription known as the Umācala Rock Inscription is the earliest epigraphic record so far discovered in Assam. It is on the north-eastern slope of the Kāmākhyā or Nīlācala hill near Gauhati. It bears no date but on palæographical grounds the inscription may be assigned to the fifth century A.D.

Now, let us come to some other sites and remains of archæological and historical importance to put in some impress on the mind of the readers about the richness and vastness of archæological wealth of our State. On the Kāmākhyā hill, located at a distance of about three miles from the town of Gauhati, a good number of sculptures of archæological interest, dating from 7th to 17th centuries A.D. have been found, and a few of them preserved under the provisioins of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act now known as Ancient Monuments and Archæological Sites and Remanis Act. A special reference may be made to the stone gateway that dates back to the time of Naranārāyaṇa, the famous Koch king of the 16th century A.D., the rebuilder of the temple of Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā. The gateway has a pointed arch and the wall surface is decorated in places with lotus medallions and heraldic looking lions on either side.

Śrī-Sūrya Pāhār is eight miles south-east of the Goālpārā town. A good number of Śivaliṅgas, rock-cut images, stone inscriptions and other remains are to be found at the site. Ruins are interesting from archæological point of view. Pañcaratna Pāglāṭek is another site where exist ruins of a Śiva temple. These two sites are well-known in Goālpārā district and may be dated to the 9th century A.D.

Among the relics of historical importance and artistic beauty discovered in the Darrang district, those on the Bāmuṇī hill in the Cole Park and the Missionary Compound have been described at length by scholars in the Reports of Archæological Survey. These remains date back to the 9th and 10th century A.D. Of these finds the most striking specimens are the two massive ornamented stone pillars now adorning the gate of the Missionary Compound at Tazpur, the headquarters of the district.

"The most remarkable sculptures of the first group are two shafts of pillars. The shaft of one of these pillars is sixteen-sided—the upper end being ornamented with a broad band having 'kīrtimukhas', at the top and the lower with dentils. Over the band the shaft is round and appears to be lathe-turned like the upper parts of the Western Chalukyan columns of the Bombay Presidency" (R. D. Banerjee). The Chummery Compound sculptures, which have been under protection of the Central Archaeoloogical

Department and are now going to be handed over to the care of State Department of Archaeology, are also of importance.

In the Nowgong district (Central Assam) ancient ruins of archæological interest have been found in superabundance in the Kapilī and Jamunā valleys. The antiquities have been brought to light by R. M. Nath and described at length in the *Journal of Assam Research Society,* Vol. I, 1937. These relics belong to the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. Of the Davakā finds of this district, the Umāliṅgana mūrti appears to be the finest and most artistic. This piece depicts the masterly skill of the sculptor. This neatly carved image is now decorating the sculptural gallery of the State Museum at Gauhati.

The Numalīgarh ruins in the Sibsagar district (Upper Assam) rightly earns a prominent place in the narration of Assam sculptures. These ruins were surveyed by R. M. Nath in 1934, and a learned article on the ruins was published in the *Journal of Assam Research Society,* Vol. II, No. I. These and the Nowgong ruins were also described in the *Annual Report of Archælogical Survey of India,* 1936-37 by the renowned archaeologist, T. N. Ramachandran, (formerly Joint Director General of Archæology, and now Special Officer for Archæology, Government of Madras).

Another sculpture found in the same district and now preserved in the Museum is the famous Deopānī Viṣṇu image bearing an inscription in corrupt Sanskrit verse. The contents of the inscription was brought to light by K. N. Dikshit, who attributed it to the 9th century A. D. on palæographical grounds by correcting Dr Bloch's estimate of the date. Two inscribed images of Hari and Hara, found at Deopānī, Golaghat subdivision, have been, of late, brought to this Museum.

A collection of huge stone images was long lying at the premises of the Sub-Divisional Officer of Sibsagar, Upper Assam. They have been assigned to the tenth and eleventh centuries A. D. These valuable sculptures have been removed to Gauhati and images of Gajalakṣmī, Varāhāvatāra, Kāmadeva, Sarasvatī and other deities now adorn the Assam State Museum.

These images are believed to be the remains of a Viṣṇu temple which possibly existed in the vicinity of the place. This ancient Vaiṣṇava temple was, in all likelihood, erected by Kāmarūpa kings of the tenth or eleventh century. It is interesting to note that even till the eleventh century the Kāmarūpa kings exercised their rule as far as the easternmost corner of the Assam Valley. "The affinities of Assamese art would seem to lie more with the schools of Bihar and Orissa than with the contemporary Pāla art of Bengal. This is not unnatural as of the streams of influence that have moulded the culture of Assam, the strongest current has always been from North Bihar and Mid-India" (Dikshit).

In this way, architectural and sculptural remains with historical background have been noticed in many places of the State. It may, how-

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ever, be noted that such relics of later period, that is, 'late medieval period', which is termed as Āhom period are to be found in Sibsagar district (Upper Assam) in fairly large numbers.

The Āhoms came to Assam in 1228 A.D. They took some time to establish their rule here. In the 17th and 18th centuries A. D. they erected palaces and lofty temples which easily attract the attention of an archæologist. Quite a few of such stractures have now been protected by the Archæological Survey of India (Government of India). These are brick-built and well-decorated.

The kingdom of Prāgyotiṣa was quite close to Uttara Kośala and Magadha, where Buddhist influences reigned supreme. It is surprising that Prāgjyotiṣa or ancient Kāmarūpa was free from such influences, yet it was something like a paradox. Yuan Chwang says that in the seventh century the people of Kāmarūpa worshipped the Devas and did not believe in Buddhism. Briefly speaking, there were a few Buddhists in ancient Kāmarūpa who were respected by the king, and Buddhism did actually exist in the country but did not flourish to a wide extent. This is evident and borne out by the fact that there are only a few specimens of Buddhist sculptures so far discovered in Assam.

A Study on Ahom Coins

By

M. C. DAS

The north-east frontier areas of India have almost throughout the ancient period remained comparatively obscure. One of the most notable mention of this region is, however, found in the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta wherein Davāka and Kāmarūpa are mentioned as the frontier kingdoms of the empire of Samudragupta—*Samataṭa-Ḍavāka-Kāmarūpa-Nepāla-Kartṛpurādi-pratyanta-nṛpatibhir,* etc. Ḍavāka has been identified with modern Davakā in the Nowgong district, Assam, and Kāmarūpa with modern Assam as a whole. There is, however, no contemporary evidence in the numismatic field to identify the individual entity of these kingdoms. The kingdom of Kāmarūpa was brought into prominence in Indian history during the early part of seventh century when the Kāmarūpa king Kumāra Bhāskarvarman made political alliance with emperor Harṣavardhana. It is likely that Kumāra Bhāskarvarman struck coins in his name in imitation of his friend and ally Harṣavardhana. Gold and copper could be obtained within the kingdoṃ of Bhāskarvarman. The art of melting metals and impressing seals on clay or melted metals was known during his time as evinced by his Nalandā clay seal and Nidhānpur and Doobi copper-plate charters. In the Silimpur stone slab inscription of Jayapāla (1115-1125 A.D.), the last king of the Brahmapāla dynasty of Assam, it is mentioned that the king (Jayapāla) offered to make a large gift of gold equal to his own weight to a learned Brahmin, Prahāsa by name, over and above 900 gold coins—*Yah Kāmarūpa-nṛpater-Jayapāladeva-nāmnaḥ tulāpuruṣa-dātur achintya dhāmnaḥ, hemnām śatāninava-nirbharam arthyamāno.* This shows that this Kāmarūpa king minted gold coins. It is unfortunate that no coins of Harṣavardhana and Jayapāla have come to light as yet.

It was, however, in the medieval period that the definite numismatic forms emerge in the history of Assam. In 1228 A.D. Sukāphā invaded Assam after crossing over the Pātkāi range and established a kingdom in the Saumārapiṭha (Upper Assam) with its capital at Charāideo. The first part of the Āhom rule was a period of political uncertainty and it was about 1540 A.D. that the Āhoms finally established their power over Assam and since then we have a continuous chain of Āhom coins. Edward Gait and A. W. Botham are of the opinion that Suklenmuṅg (1539-1552) was the first Āhom ruler to strike coins in about 1543 A.D. Their statements are, however, based on superficial collection of Āhom coins. Harakānta Sadar Amin, in his *Asam Burañjī*, (edited by S. K. Bhuyan), writes that Sudāngphā *alias* Bāmuṇī Kōwar (1397-1407 A.D.) struck coins on his accession to the throne, and since then the practice of issuing coins by the subsequent rulers on ascending the coronation building, known as the *siṅgarighar*, was continued. The coronation ceremony being enormously expensive, some of the kings used to strike coins even before formally ascending the throne. The Burañjī further adds that Suhuṅgmuṅg *alias* Dihiṅgiyā Rajā or Swarganārāyaṇa (1497-1539), after his successful conquest of Kamatā up to the Karatoyā river, deputed Chankhām Ghar-Sandikai as his envoy to install Kamateśwara (king of Kamatā) on the throne of Koch Behār and then to proceed to Jagannātha Ṭhākur (Purī) for constructing a tank for the deity. His visit to Jagannātha was arranged by the mission through Vikramsen, the then king of Orissa, and for the mission's expenditure at Jagannātha-kṣetra a sum of two hundred gold mohurs was allotted by Suhuṅgmuṅg. This shows that gold coins were minted by Suhuṅgmuṅg also.

Be that as it may, the earliest Āhom coins so far discovered are those issued by Suklenmuṅg in about 1543 A.D. He was a contemporary of Koch king Naranārāyaṇa who also struck coins in Śaka 1477, i.e., 1555 A.D. The coins of Suklenmuṅg bear Āhom script with Āhom language. For example :

Obverse :—*Cāo phā Suklenmunn pincāo lākni plekni.*

The great (cāo) king (phā) Suklenmuṅg, reign (pincao) year (lākni) 15th year of the cycle (plekni).

Reverse :—*Kāo bay phā tārā heucu.*

I (kāo) the king (phā) offer (heucu) prayer (bay) to the Almighty. (tārā).

Sutāmla *alias* Jayadhvajasiṁha (1648-1663) was the first Āhom king to become a convert to Hinduism, and in the Śaka year 1570 he first struck coins in Sanskrit in Assamese character. The following is the legend :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Svarga-Nārāyaṇa-devasya Śāke* 1570.

Reverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Hari-Hara-caraṇa parāyaṇasya.*

Supunmuṅg *alias* Cakradhvajasiṁha also struck coins in the same manner. The legend of his coins runs as follows :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Svargadeva-Cakradhvaja-Siṁhasya Śāke* 1585.

Reverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Śiva-Rāma-padāravinda-parāyaṇasya.*

The legends of these coins follow closely that of Rājā Ganeśa (Rājā Kans) *alas* Danujamardana Deva and also that of Mahendra Deva *alias* Jalaluddin Muhammed Shah, son of Raja Ganeśa. Mahendra Deva's coin has the following legend :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Śrimān-Mahendra-Devasya.*

Reverse :—*Śrī-Caṇḍī-caraṇa-parāyaṇasya Śakābda* 1340 *Pāṇḍu-nagarāt.*

From 1671 A. D. a chaotic condition prevailed in the country and there was practically no administration for about eleven years. During this period of political uncertainty a few kings, princes, queens and nobles of the Āhom royal families fell victims to the unrest in the country. In 1681 A.D. Supātphā *alias* Gadādhara Siṁha was declared king, and with his accession peace was restored in the country. Gadādhara Siṁha reintroduced the Āhom language and script in his coins. The reading of his coins is :

Obverse :—*Cāo Supātphā pinkhum lākni rāicān.*

The great (cāo) Supātphā reign (pinkhum) year (Lākni) raican (33rd) year of the cycle.

Reverse :—*Kāo bay phā lendan heucu.*

I (kāo) the king (phā) offer (heucu) prayer (bay) to India (lendan).

Sukrunphā *alias* Rudrasiṁha, son of Gadādharasiṁha employed Sanskrit language in Assamese character in his coins, and it is to be noted that he also introduced an annual issue from 1696 A.D. (Saka 1618), the date of his accession to the throne. The legend of one of his coins is as follows :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Śrīmat-Svargadeva-Rudrasiṁhasya Śāke* 1618.

Reverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Hara-Gauri-padāmbuja-madhukarasya.*

The most interesting coins of the series are those minted during the reign of Sivasiṁha and Rājeśwarasiṁha. The inscription on the reverse gives an impression of the religious belief of the kings. The Āhom kings before Rudrasiṁha were not staunch Śāktas and, hence, in the coins of Jayadhvajasiṁha and his son, Cakradhvajasiṁha, we find Hari, Hara, etc., mentioned. Śivasiṁha was the first Āhom king to embrace the Śākta form of Hinduism initiated by Kṛṣnarāma Nyāyavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya Gosāi who was later known as the Parbatīyā Gosāi. All Āhom kings subsequent to Śivasiṁha mention only Hara and Gaurī in their coins. Śivasiṁha and his queens, Phuleśvarī (Pramatheśvarī), Ambikā and Sarveśvarī, marked their devotion to Hara and Gauri in their coins. They, of course, did not use the same inscription. Phuleśvari (Pramathesvarī) describes herself as *mahiṣī,* while Ambikā and Sarveśvarī describe themselves as *vallabhā* of the king. For example, in the coins of Phuleśvarī and Pramatheśvarī the inscription on the reverse are respectively : *Śrī-Śrī-Śivasiṁha-nṛpa-mahiṣī-Śrī-Phuleśvarī-devyāh* and *Śrī-Śrī-Sivasiṁha-nṛpa-mahiṣī-Srī-Pramatheś-varī-devyāḥ.* Again on the coins of Ambikā and Sarveśvarī the inscriptions on the reverses are respectively *Śrī-Śrī-Śivasiṁha-nṛpa-tadvallabhā Śrīmad-Ambikā-devīnāṁ* and *Śrī-Śrī-Śivasiṁha-nṛpa-tadvallabhā-Srī-Sarveś-vari-devīnāṁ.* It is interesting to note that unlike coins of other Āhom kings some of the coins of Śivasiṁha, Phuleśvarī (Pramatheśvarī), Ambikā and Sarveśvarī contain regnal years in imitation of Mughal coins. The first Āhom coin in the Persian script was struck by Pramatheśvarī. It is a square coin. The legend reads as

Obverse :

Shah
Siva Simha
Sikka
Zad Chow mohur
Bahukum Begum Pramatheswari Shah

(King Śivasiṁha struck coin as the Sun by order Queen Pramatheswari Shah.)

Reverse :

Maimanut manus
Sane 15 Jalus
Zarb Garhgaon
1651

In the year 15 of the fortunate reign struck at Gargaon 1651 (1729 A. D.)

This coin invests a special interest in the numismatic issues of Assam as its obverse legend closely follows that on the coins of Nurjāhān issues of Jahāngīr. The meaning of the legend on Nurjāhān's coins is : "By order of Shah Jahāngīr, gained a hundred beauties gold, through the name of Nurjāhān Bādshāh Begum".

Sunenphā *alias* Pramattasiṁha again introduced the Āhom language and script in his coins. But while Suklenmuṅg offered prayers to Tārā, Pramattasiṁha like Gadādharasiṁha offered prayers to Indra (Lendon). He also used the Sanskrit language and Assamese script in some of his issues. The legend on the reverse of one of his issues reads as *Śrī-Śrī-Śiva-padaparasya*", 'adhering to the feet of Lord Śiva'. This signifies that he was a worshipper of Śiva.

Rājeśvarasiṁha experimented different forms of coins almost throughout his reign. In addition to the ordinary octagonal coins in Assamese script he struck in the first year of his reign octagonal coins in the Āhom script. He also issued square coins in Assamese script. Besides, he issued octagonal coins with Nāgarī inscription in 1675 Śaka and at least two issues of coins with Persian script were also struck—a square issue in 1675 Śaka and an octagonal issue in 1685. On both the latter issues name of the mint Raṅgpur is minted. It may be noted here that in a large number of coins of Rājesvarasiṁha an allegiance to Mahesvarī in place of Hara and Gauri is also mentioned. The Persian coin which bears close similarity to some Agra issues of Jahāngīr bear similar couplet, the meaning in the legend in the silver issue of Jahāngīr from Agra dated 1014 A.H. is : "Shāh Nuruddin Jahāngīr, son of Ākbar Bādshāh illumined the face of the coins with the colour of the sun and the moon".

Towards the end of the eighteenth century during the reign of Gaurinathasiṁha, the Mowāmariyā (Māyāmarīyā) Vaiṣṇava sect, become rebellious and succeeded in setting up different kings in different parts of eastern Assam. Two of such kings, namely, Sarvānandasiṁha and Bharatasiṁha issued coins in their names. The legend of the coins of King Sarvānanda is as follows :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Svargadeva-Śrī-Sarvānandasiṁha-nṛpasya* Śāke 1716. (Of the illustrious king Śrī-Sarvānanda, in Śaka 1761.)

Reverse :—*Śrī-Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-kamala-makaranda-madhukarasya.* (Of the bee intoxicated with the honey of the lotus feet of Śrī-Kṛṣṇa.)

The legend in the coins of Bharatasiṁha is :

Obverse :—*Śrī-Bhagadatta-kulodbava-Śrī-Bharathasiṁhanṛpasya* Śake 1718.

Reverse :—*Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-caraṇāravinda-makaranda-pramatta-madhukarasya.*

It is to be noted that Bharatasiṁha claimed his descent from Bhagadatta of Mahābhārata fame. While minting coins the Māyāmarīyā Kings followed the Āhom coins in all respects except in some of the legends noted above. It is said that the Māyāmarīyā king Ramākānta struck nine-sided coins. But such coins have not yet come to light. The number nine has a special significance in Vaiṣṇava theology.

After the overthrow of the Māyāmarīyās the Āhom king Kamaleśvara Siṁha and Candrakāntasiṁha struck coins in the customary way, but Brajanātha Siṁha who struck at least four issues of coins was a Vaiṣṇava, as is evident from the legend on the reverse of his coins which runs as follows :

Śrī-Śrī-Rādhā-caraṇa-kamala-makaranda-madhukarasya.

It appears that he was a votary of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

The last dated coin is a quarter rupee of Jogeśvara Siṁha dated 1734 Śaka (1821 A.D.). Assam ceded to the British empire in 1826 A.D. whence onward special interest in the numismatic field ceases to exist in this state.

The rupee and the gold mohurs of the Āhom kings were struck to the Indian standard of about 170 grains. Rudrasiṁha introduced half and quarter rupees whereas in eighth and sixteenth both of rupee and of the muhars were introduced by Rājeśvarasiṁha and a thirty-second by Gaurīnāthasiṁha.

Different interpretations have been advanced by different scholars regarding the octagonal shape of the Āhom coins. One view is that as the Saumārapīṭha was eight sided as narrated in the *Yoginī-tantra* (*aṣṭa koṇañca saumāra' yatra Dikkaravāsinī*) the Āhom kings adopted eight sides in their coins also. But the Āhom king who first introduced coins, whether he be Sudāngphā or Suklenmuṅg, was not formally converted to Hinduism so as to be influenced by the verses of the *Yoginī-tantra* in the formation of state policy. Another view is that the idea may possibly be derived from the conception of eight directions of the earth so that the coin might represent the vastness of the Āhom kingdom extending in all the directions. The third view is that the number eight is an auspicious number among the Tāis and hence the Āhom kings might adopt eight for the number of sides of their coins.

A short note may be added regarding the dates in the Āhom coins bearing Āhom script in the Āhom language. The Āhoms commenced their method of reckoning time from 568 A.D., the year in which Khunluṅg and Khunlāi, the reputed progenitors of the Āhom royal family, descended from heaven by means of a golden ladder so that in order to ascertain the corresponding year *anno domini* the number of *taociṅās* should be multiplied by 60, the number of the year in the *taociṅās* added and also 568.

Turning now to the coins, the year of the *taociṅā* on the coins of Suklenmuṅg is *plekni*, i.e., 15th year, the number of the cycle is not mentioned; but we know that Suklenmuṅg reigned from 1539 to 1552 A.D. We may, therefore, assume that it was the 17th *taociṅā*. Consequently the English date will be 16 × 60 + 15 + 568 = 1543 A.D. The coins of Supātphā were minted on *lākni rāicān* or the 33rd year of the *taociṅā* and as Śupātphā's date is 1681-1695 A.D. the cycle in question must be the 19th *taociṅā*. The equivalent date in our Era will therefore be 18 × 60 + + 33 + 568 = 1681. A.D. Proceeding in the same way, *lākni kākeō* in the coin of Pramattasiṁha corresponds to 1744 A.D., which is the first year of the monarch's reign. (Gait : Notes on Some Āhom Coins, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1883, p. 288.)

The National Struggle for Freeuom and Assam's Contribution to It

By

KESAV NARAYAN DUTT

Real political awakening of the people on a wide scale may be side to have begun in the State of Assam as elsewhere in India with the Non-co-operation Movement launched by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. It was preceded by a period of preparation during which people belonging mostly to the educated and professional classes formed associations like the Sārvajanik Sabhā and the Assam Association to ventilate popular grievances and give expression to popular discontent over administrative measures which affected the interests of the people. These organisations helped by the local press contributed to the growth of political consciousness amongst the people. But even before these organisations came into being people in Assam, that is the peasant folk, expressed themselves through their own Mels or rural assemblies on matters concerning their interests. It is those Mels or Rāij-mels which organised several agrarian uprisings in Assam against exploitation of their means of subsistence by an alien Government. These Mels did not of course fight for freedom as such but they did fight to enforce the popular will in matters concerning the people. Besides these there were the old feudal leaders of the people, the nobles and the princes of old royal houses, who made several attempts through plots and insurrections to throw off the foreing yoke. These are as old as British rule in Assam. Thus Assam contributed to the national struggle for freedom at every stage as will be evident from the account that follows.

Discontent against foreign rule: There was an independent kingdom in Assam for nearly six centuries under the Āhom rulers before the British took possession of it in 1826. Between 1816 and 1824 the Burmese had led three invasions into the country paralysing the administration and establishing in its stead a Reign of Terror. Their aggressive encroachments into British territory involved them in a war with the British power in India which resulted in their ultimate defeat. In the Treaty of Yāndābu that followed on February 24, 1826, the Burmese king renounced all claims of conqest over Assam and the British kept it under their own occupation by right of conquest from the Burmese. At the beginning the Assamese people not only acquiesced in British rule in general but even welcomed the Britishers as deliverers from the tyrannical rule of the Burmese. But the traditions of freedom and independence which the people of Assam had enjoyed throughout the centuries in the past, could not be forgotten by the people and their leaders in spite of the calamity that befell them. Discontent with alien rule was soon manifest. The old dignitaries saw that their estates and pykes were being taken away in lieu of petty pensions and offices in the subordinate ranks offered to them by the new Government. Such upper class discontent brought about the first rebellion against British rule in Assam in 1828 within three years of the establishment of that rule.

Rebellion of Gomdhar Konwar, 1828 : This was the rebellion of Gomdhar Konwar, a prince of the Āhom royal blood. On March 7, 1828, the Government declared the permanent annexation of Lower Assam to British possession leaving the question of Upper Assam still pending. Martial law régime which had been in force there was, however, ended and some companies of troops were withdrawn. Gomdhar Konwar with the active support of some members of the Āhom nobility attempted to turn the situation to his advantage. He assumed the insignia of royalty and for a time challenged the might of the British rāj in Upper Assam. But the attempt was premature and based on an under-estimate of the strength of the occupying power. The rising was suppressed in October 1828. The prince and his principal associates were punished with exile and imprisonment. But some of the prisoners escaped and they took advantage of the brewing discontent to make a fresh attempt when the opportune moment would arrive.

Insurrection in the Hills—Teerut Singh : The discontent against British rule was not restricted to Upper Assam alone, although it was here that the memories and traditions of the *ancien régime* were most keenly cherished. In the Hills of Assam also the hillmen resisted British penetration into their regions. There was discontent in the eastern hills amongst the Khāmptis and the Singphos. Many of them resented the agreements of subservience which some of their chiefs had entered into with the British in 1826. In the Khāsi Hills British imperial penetration raised a great local conflagration in 1829 under the leadership of U. Teerut Singh, a brave Khasi Chief. Two English officers and some sixty sepoys engaged in the work of opening a road across the Khāsi Hills joining Assam and Sylhet were massacred at Nongkhlāw by the Khāsis who suspected British designs in their hills. The insurrection of the Khāsis aided by the Gāros was in progress at the beginning of 1830 when warlike preparations were made by the Khāmptis and Singphos threatening the north-east frontier. An Assamese prince called Gadādhar Singha was moving in the frontiers disguised as a Khāmpti priest and preaching rebellion against the British. The army of the Singphos led by Wāckun Khoonjāo was, however, dispersed by the British troops soon but it took the British four years to reduce the Khāsi Hills to subjection after protracted warfare with Teerut Singh and his capable generals. Teerut Singh, the hero of the Khāsis, surrendered in January 1833, when all hope was lost, and he died soon afterwards in the British prison at Dacca.

The Revolt of 1830 in Upper Assam: Simultaneously with the Singpho risings in March 1830 a more serious rebellion was organised in Upper Assam by the ex-nobility of Assam under the leadership of Dhanjay Piyaliyā Bargohāin and Piyali Barphukan, son of Badanchandra Barphukan, with the object of driving out the British from Assam, and placing on the throne of Assam another Āhom prince, a certain Konwar Roopchānd. Some of the men who had participated in Gomdhar's rebellion but had escaped punishment were in this plot. Knowing the fate of Gomdhar's rebellion as they did, the organisers of this second rebellion took care to enlist the support of tribal chiefs who did not favour consolidation of British rule in Assam. They wrote to the Khāmptis and the Singphos, the Mowāmariyās (Māyāmarīyās) and the Manipuris, the Nagās, the Khāsis and the Gāros for help. A considerable force was gathered and the time chosen for the rising was also opportune as the Singphos on the east and the Khāsis on the south had already taken arms against the British.

Martyrdom of Piyali Barphukan: On March 25, 1830, the rebels gathered near Rangpur in Sibsāgar and set fire to the magazine near the Sipāhi lines. But they were put to flight by the guards who rushed out of the lines and retreated to Geleki to the south of Rangpur. Here most of the leaders were captured by a British detachment that marched against them. Piyali Barphukan, the principal instigator of this rebellion and Jiurām Duwaliyā Baruwā, another accomplice, were sentenced to death and hanged at Sibsāgar in August 1830, and four others were banished and imprisoned for 14 years at Dacca.

This was the last organised rebellion against British rule engineered by the upper classes in Assam. It was too early to expect a general popular rising against the foreigners after the terrible disaster suffered at the hands of the Burmese, but the people remembered in sullen silence the martyrdom of Piyali Barphukan for the freedom of the country. Superior arms and trained generalship on the part of the British and lack of opportunities for combination on the part of their antagonists in the hills and plains of Assam at this time decided the issue of the rebellions in favour of the British. One immediate result of these rebellions was the restoration, as a concession to popular feelings in Upper Assam, of Purandar Singha, the last independent Āhom king, as a tributary native prince in 1833. But on the plea of misgovernment and default in payment of the tribute, Purandar Singha was deposed in 1838, and his territories resumed by the British. The result was lingering discontent in this royal house and amongst the upper classes who favoured his rule. In 1842 the British annexed Sadiyā and the Muttock country to the south of it. By 1854 when the territories of Tulārām

Senāpati, a Kachāri chief in the North Cachar Hills, were annexed, British rule was consolidated over the major part of Assam.

Repercussions of the Revolt of 1857 : But all was quiet on the eastern front when 1857 came. Even in 1853 when Mills, a Judge of the Sadar Court, visited Assam to report on the administration of the province, Manirām Datta Dewān, an Assamese of note who had earlier served the British authority as Revenue Sheristadar of Upper Assam and then as Minister of Purandar-Singha when the latter was restored to his throne as a tributary prince, submitted to Mills a critical analysis of the evils of British rule in Assam in a petition in which he pleaded for the restoration of native rule. In 1857 he was in Calcutta moving the Supreme Government on behalf of Kandarpeswar-Singha Cāring Rajā, grandson of Purandar-Singha, for restoration to him of at least a part of the ancient kingdom over which his forefathers ruled or for a decent pension suiting his dignity as a prince. The news of the Mutiny at this time at Meerut and other places and of popular revolts in Northern India inspired the Dewān with a new urge of patriotism. He weighed in his minds the possibility of an armed insurrection in Assam too for overthrowing the British and restoring the old native rule with Kandarperwar-Singha as the Rajā of Assam.

Martyrdom of Manirām Dewan and Piyali Baruwā :—Manirām Dewān wrote secret letters to the Cāring Rajā and other reliable persons about him urging them to make preparations for a *coup de etat* to seize power from the British in Assam. Accordingly preparations were made for a rising to take place at the time of the Durgāpujā in 1857. Arms and ammunitions were gathered ; men were enrolled as soldiers ; contact was established with the Subādārs and a few Jamādārs of the Assam Light Infantry Troops at Dibrugarh and Golāghāt and their support obtained. Many leading men of the time actively joined in the plot and others extended their sympathy. But unfortunately before the Dewān himself could come to Assam to take the lead a few of his letters were intercepted by the District Officer of Sibsāgar and the plot was foiled. The Cāring Rajā was put under arrest and sent to the Ālipur Jail. Manirām was arrested in Calcutta and brought to Assam for trial. Others implicated in the plot, notable amongst whom were Piyali Baruwā, Madhu Mallik and Dutirām Baruwā, Criminal Sheristadar of Sibsagar, were also arrested and brought to trial. Maniram Dewān was tried on 23rd February 1858 under Act 14 of 1857, sentenced to death for treason, and hanged at Jorhat on the 26th together with Piyali Baruwā, similarly sentenced. Many others were given sentences of transportation or imprisonment. Native officers of the army and sepoys guilty of giving support to the plot or of sympathising with mutinous outbreaks in India were court-martialled and awarded sentences of hard labour and imprisonment. Kandarpeswar Singha was inturned at Gauhati where he lived as a political prisoner with a pension granted to him. Thus Assam played her rôle in the First War of India's Independence in 1857. Manirām Dewān and Piyali Baruwā became martyrs to the cause of freedom in Assam and their sacrifice and the sacrifice of their compatriots made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of the Assamese people who remembered with pride these heroes of 1857 at every stage of the freedom struggle later.

New Phase of Popular Uprisings: The period of more or less sporadic insurrections and plots and conspiracies engineered by the princes and nobles to overthrow the British régime in Assam came to a close with the abortive attempt of Manirām Dewān as described above. The character of the struggle against the British changes after 1860. We now enter upon a new phase—a phase of agrarian outbreaks against enhancement of the land revenue or imposition of new taxes and measures that affected the economic interests of the people. Popular discontent increased with every new assessment of the land revenue at enhanced rates or with the imposition of new taxes such as income-tax, stamp duties, and license tax for utilisation of forest products, etc. Manirām Dewān had protested against the opium trade of the East India Company in Assam. But his protest was unheeded and opium and salt continued to yield large revenues to the Government. The language controversy which arose out of the introduction of Bengali into the courts and schools of Assam in place of Assamese in 1837 also deepened and agitated popular mind in the 'sixties. In the post-Mutiny period of the nineteenth century the Rāij-mels or Mels, which are assemblies of the common people under rural leadership, are seen to have been held in different parts of the country to ventilate popular grievances.

The Phulaguri Uprising and the Jaintia Rebellions: In 1861 the peasant population of the Phulaguri area in the Nowgong district, mostly tribals, vehemently protested through their Mels against the order prohibiting poppy cultivation in that year and rumours of imposition of taxes on incomes and on betel-nuts and vines. In the demonstrations of resentment made by the people in October 1861 one English officer, Lt. Singer, lost his life. The military was called in to suppress the rising and some eight tribal leaders were punished with death or transportation.

The Jaintiā risings of 1860 and 1862 were of a more serious nature. The first was occasioned by the imposition of a house-tax on the Jaintiās (Synteng), who had known of no taxes before and rose in rebellion forthwith. But the revolt was stamped out by the employment of a large force which was then in the hills. Quickly thereafter the levy of an income-tax was announced by the Government and the hillmen resented this obnoxious impost. They held deliberations in their village assemblies and decided once again to resist and revolt. Interference with tribal customs and usages was also a cause of this second revolt which was of a more determined nature. Troops were again requisitioned to suppress the rebellion and an indecisive guerilla warfare followed. It was not till the end of 1863 that the last of the rebels surrendered. There were resistance fights against the British in almost all the hill areas. These became frequent in the Naga Hills into which repeated expeditions were led by the British in the nineteenth century. The British justified their actions against the hillmen by pointing to the latter's predatory raids into the plains in British possession. But there is no doubt that the hillmen's innate love of freedom was one principal cause of their resistance to outside authority.

In 1868-69 the rates of revenue in the Assam Valley districts were doubled all round. There was consequently great discontent amongst the people which found expression through their Rāij-mels, especially in the districts of Kāmrup and Darrang. The police dispered the popular gatherings which were in the nature of demonstrations against the enhanced revenue. But the Government would not stop taking advantage of the periodical nature of the revenue assessments and kept on enhancing them every ten years or so quite unmindful of the groans of poverty and sometimes even of starvation on the part of the people.

In 1874 Assam was constituted a separate unit of the British Empire in India under a Chief Commissioner. The peace of the province was not seriously disturbed till the last decade of the century except for some warfare in the Naga Hills in 1879 which resulted in the final subjugation of the Āngāmi Nagās. In 1891 there was a rebellion in the native State of Manipur where the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr. Quinton, lost his life with four other European officers at the hands of nationalist Manipuris. The British retaliated with vengeance and Tikendrajit Singh and other leaders of the rebellion were sent to the gallows. The rising of the Eastern Lushāis against British penetration into their hills in 1892 caused great worry to the authorities and necessitated strong military action.

The Assam Riots 1894: More important than these rebellions in the outskirts of Assam were the popular uprisings which came to be known as the "Assam Riots" of 1893-94. In 1893 the Chief Commissioner Sir William Ward devised new assessment rules increasing the rates of revenue by 70 to 80 percent. The people were however in no mood to bear any enhancement whatever. A series of Rāij-mels was held from one end of the province to the other with particular intensity in the districts of Kāmrup and Darrang to voice popular resentment. It is astonishing to see how the mass people of those days spontaneously rose in revolt against unjust impositions of the alien rulers. They demanded withdrawal of the unjust orders and in Kāmrup and Darrang they soon organised a campaign for non-payment of revenue and enforced the decision of the Mels by boycott and ex-communication of any one who disobeyed it. The demonstrations of the people at places like Rangiyā, Lāchimā and Pātharughāt, and their determination not to pay the enhanced revenue at any cost alarmed the authorities and they used force to suppress these popular uprisings which they called 'riots'. A good many lives were lost as a result of firings by the police and the military on the protesting crowds. But though the risings were suppressed even with brutal cruelty at places, the people reared in their minds a sullen disaffection leading to a silent psychologicial preparation for a greater strife against the alien government when a better opportunity would arrive. These so-called riots caused a deep stir throughout the province and had its echo even in the Imperial Legislative Council of those days where questions were asked about the repressive measures. These also became a topic for discussion in the newspapers of the time some of which adversely criticised the Government.

A New Awakening: A new awakening marked the close of the century and the beginning of the next. Under British administration the face of the country had changed somewhat for good or ill, due to the spread of English education, growth of trade and commerce, development of communications, industry and transport. The technique of expressing displeasure at the omissions and commissions of the alien Government also underwent a radical change. In the countryside in place of unwieldy Rāij-mels, Ryot Sabhās came into being with formal procedures of transacting business. The Sārvajanik Sabhā was formed at Jorhat by educated citizens to express public opinion on topics of the day. Increase of land revenue was its chief target of attack. We are on the threshold of a great national awakening throughout India the, advent of which was hailed by the foundation in 1885 of the Indian National Congress. Delegates from Assam attended even some of the early sessions of the Congress. The epoch for popular and well regulated associations and organisations had begun. Some of those that were established in Assam were literary and cultural organisation devoted to the advancement of Assamese language, literature and art. A new generation of Assamese literary men—Gunābhiram Baruā, Lakshmināth Bezbaroā, Chandrakumar Āgarwālā, Padmanāth Gohāin Baruā, to name only a few—renovated Assamese literature with the liberalism of the West and the glorious past traditions of Assam. Formation of the national mind and rousing of political consciousness were the main achievements of some of these organisations. An intellectual revolt preparatory to a great political revolution for the attainment of independence was thus on its way.

The Assam Association: In Assam the stage was thus prepared for the formation in 1903 by the educated gentry of Assam of an all-Assam political organisations known as the Assam Association. During the first two decades of the present century the Assam Association served as the mouth-piece of the people of Assam in presenting their needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations before the government. Mānikchandra Baruā was its first able General Secretary and Ghanashyām Baruā conducted its affairs at a later stage. Men of moderate political views were generally prominent in this Association and petitions and memorials within constitutional limits for redress of grievances or concession of demands constituted its modus operandi as was the vogue with other political organisations of the time not excluding the Congress. And yet the Association proved its worth by forging a national forum for the people of this province, as against sectarian and communal organisations, giving them a voice of unity and strength. It reacted to the political thought and movements of the time in the Indian scene and saw that Assam did not lag behind India's march to progress in the political sphere. It extended its support to the Home Rule agitation of the time and gave expression to popular resentment against the Rowlatt Act and the Jalianwall Bagh massacre. Tarunrām Phookan, Nabinchandra Bardoloi, Chandranāth Sarmā, Gopināth Bardoloi, Rohinikumar Chowdhury, Bishnurām Medhi, Kuladhar Chaliha—and many others who later distinguished themselves as leaders of the freedom struggle under the Congress received their first training in political leadership under the banner of the Assam Association. They were the men who introduced an element of extremism into the Association and replaced it in 1921 by the provincial Congress organisation.

Achievements of the Assam Association: The Assam Association launched a strong agitation against the grazing tax imposed by the Government on grazing of cattle in the forests of Assam. It sent a strong deputation of members to give evidence before Mr. Montague, Secretary of State for India, at Calcutta when he came to India to ascertain Indian political views in 1917 on the eve of giving India a fresh measure of self-government. The delegation forcefully presented Assam's case for being considered for political advancement in line with other provinces. An important act of the Association was the sending of a delegation to London to plead before the Lord Selbourne Committee of the House of Lords Assam's case for inclusion in the proposed Montague-Chelmsford Reforms Scheme as a major province. Nabinchandra Bardoloi and Prasannakumār Baruwā formed this delegation and the efforts of the delegation were crowned with success in spite of the recommendations of official quarters and European planters in Assam to the contrary.

It may be mentioned here that Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905 and formed a new province by joining Eastern Bengal with Assam under a Lt.-Governor. This injudicious act gave a rude shock to public feeling in Bengal and led to the launching of an anti-partition agitation and the Swadeshi Movement with a view to undoing the partition. This movement with its urge for nationalism and patriotism and with a programme of boycott of British goods raised Bengal to a pitch of anti-British activities and had its appeal even outside Bengal. In the wake of the movement the cult of terrorism also received an impetus. Assassination of European officers and armoury raids were attempted at several places. Some Bengal anarchists came to Assam also and tried to secure a hold over its youth. In the Surmā Valley the Swadeshi agitation took strong roots. The movement succeeded in its principal objective of getting the partition annulled in 1912 and at the same time strengthened the Home Rule movement in

India. The Secretary of the Assam Association expressed satisfaction over the annulment of the partition and restoration of Assam to the status quo.

The Non-co-operation Movement: The Montague-Chelmsford Reform Scheme as embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919 did not satisfy Indian political aspirations and the Congress in a special Session held at Calcutta in September 1920 decided under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to launch the great Non-Co-operation movement against the British Government in India. This was a momentous decision which was later confirmed by the Nagpur Session of the Congress in December 1920. Britain had violated her pledges to concede responsible self-government to India given during the First Great War when India helped her wholeheartedly with men, money and other resources. The leaders of India led by Mahatma Gandhi took the bold step of attempting to wrest freedom from Britain by the novel method of non-violent non-co-operation.

In Assam the Assam Association had been closely pursuing the political development of the time. In a special session held in October 1920 at Gauhati the Association carried through the Resolution of non-co-operation with the Government for the achievement of Swarāj. This decision was confirmed at the plenary session of the Association held at Tezpur in December 1920. The Association had played its rôle in the political advancement of Assam. The leaders jumped into the all-India political struggle for the liberation of India. The Association soon became defunct and the Assam Provincial Congress was set up in its place in June 1921. The province was so long represented in the Congress through the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee but henceforth she was constituted a separate Congress province. Assam was prepared, thanks to her leaders, to march with the rest of India towards the common goal of freedom. Henceforth the struggle for freedom in Assam forms an inseparable part of the Indian struggle.

One remarkable feature of the non-co-operation movement was its intense mass appeal. The nationalist movement of India was no more restricted to a handful of politically conscious educated men in the different professions. Students, labourers, and the peasants, and not only men but women too, felt the urge for Swarāj and responded to the call for non-co-operation. Assam soon found herself in the forefront of the struggle. The elections to the Reformed Councils lacked popular support and few voters turned up to cast their votes. The leaders of the movement withdrew their candidature for membership of the Council. Students struck schools and colleges and large batches of them enrolled themselves as volunteers to spread the message of non-co-operation in the villages. Boycott of foreign goods and especially of English cloths, propagation of Khaddar and Swadeshi, and picketing of liqour and opium shops and foreign cloth shops were the chief items in the programme for achievement of Swaraj besides boycott of schools and colleges and Law-courts run under the

English system. Many eminent lawyers gave up practice. People's panchayats were formed at different places in the rural areas to settle disputes outside the Law-courts. Non-co-operation began to be preached from the press and the platform. Large and crowded meetings were held and addressed by the leaders spreading the gospel of non-co-operation and Swarāj from one end of the province to the other. Vibrations of new life—a life promising freedom from bondage to the foreign yoke and of freedom from the impact of a foreign culture, filled the hearts of the people.

The visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Assam in company of the Ali brothers in August 1921 gave a strong impetus to the movement in both the valleys of Assam. Large crowds gathered even at wayside Railway Station to have a *darśana* of the Mahatma and offer him ovations as he passed through Assam. The meetings he addressed at Gauhati, Tezpur, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Silchar and other places drew crowds of thousands of people even from interior villages, and huge bonfires were raised in these meetings for burning heaps of foreign cloths thrown into them by the audience. Gandhiji's visit was a tremendous success for non-co-operation in Assam, and Gandhiji himself expressed satisfaction with it when he wrote appreciatingly about "Lovely Assam" in his *Young India.*

Prominent amongst the leaders of the non-co-operation movement in Assam, to name only a few, were Nabinchandra Bardoloi, Chandranāth Sarmā, Tarunrām Phukan, Kuladhar Chalihā, Pandit Kanakchandra Sarmā, Fiznur Ali, Lakshewar Baruā, Basantakumār Das, Brajendranārāyan Chowdhury amongst the elder politicians and Gopināth Bardoloi, Bishnurām Medhi, Rohinikumar Chowdhury, Omeo Kumār Das, Dhanirām Talukdār, Hemchandra Baruā, Haladhar Bhuyān, Debeswar Sarmā and Ambikāgiri Roy Chowdhury amongst the comparatively young Nabin Bordoloi, Tarunrām Phukan and Gopināth Bordoloi later attained all India heights of eminence as political leaders before their death. Chandranāth Sarmā, the 'firy petrol' of non-co-operation in Assam, was snatched away by the hands of death in his prime in 1922, and in him Assam lost a leader of great resolve and sacrifice. Lakshmidhar Sarmā and Rohini Kānta Hati-Baruā were amongst the young adherents with promises of leadership in the future, but the two latter also became victims of untimely death.

Repression of the Movement: The Government of the Province while working the reformed constitution with the help of the moderates led by men like Rai Bahadur Ghanashyām Baruā, Ābdul Mazid, I. Mazid and others did not sit idle when the non-co-operation movement raged in the province. The Government had to face a mass movement on an unprecedented scale, but it did not take them long to meet the challenge with powers of repression. Arrest and imprisonment of most of the leaders and workers of the movement and beating and lathi-charging by the police of crowds assembled in meetings that were prohibited or of volunteers engaged in picketing before schools and colleges and foreign cloth and liquor shops followed. A counter-propaganda was also launched against Gandhism and non-co-operation with the help of the officialdom and those who supported the Government. But people lost the fear of jails and courting imprisonment was considered to be an honour. The counter-propaganda had little or no effect and the movement made good progress in spite of repression. The people of Assam showed how truly and faithfully they imbibed the lessons of non-violence preached by the Mahatma, and the year 1921 gave Assam a definite place of distinction in he fight for freedom.

The Swarajya Party: In 1922, after the Chouri-Choura riots in U.P. the non-co-operation movement were suspended. Since then some of the political activities of the movement were suspended for several years and the leaders put stress on the constructive programme. When C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, with T. R. Phookan from Assam, formed the Swarajya party within the Congress to fight the reforms from within by entering the Councils, majority of members of the Congress in Assam decided in favour of Council entry. Accordingly Swarāj party members though numbering eight only entered the Assam Legislative Council in 1924. Joined by an equal number of independents this group under the leadership of Jonab Fiznur Ali functioned with considerable effectiveness in criticising government actions, voting down unpopular measures and carrying through resolutions of popular import. Nabin Bordoloi chose to remain with the 'No-changers' led by C. Rajagopalachariar, while T. R. Phukan became Assam's spokesman in the Central Legislature. In the next election in 1926 Bordoloi also sought election to the Council and being returned, became the leader of the Congress group. Meanwhile Congress members entered the Local Boards and Municipalities and began to make their influence felt in these institutions of local self-government trying to replace the official Chairmen of these bodies by elected representatives of the people.

Popular Organisations—Gauhati Congress Session: Communal riots, not unoften provoked by interested parties, began to mark Hindu-Muslim relations in India from 1932 onward with occasional intervals of outward peace and harmony. But it is remarkable that Hindu-Muslim relations were hardly ever disturbed in Assam in a noticeable manner throughout the course of the freedom struggle. After the mass movement of 1921 was suspended local agitation was kept up in Assam round questions of abolition of the unpopular grazing tax, prohibition of opium, reduction of land revenue for giving relief to the peasants whose economic condition had deteriorated after the First Great War, and restriction of immigration of East Bengal Muslims to Assam. Ambikāgiri Rāychoudhury founded the Assam Saṁrakṣinī Sabhā, and without seceding from the Congress he began to voice through this organisation demands for vindication of the rights of the Assamese people, the rights of the children of the soil against aggression of outsiders. The ideology made strong impressions on sections of the public and the organisation was later transformed into the Asam Jātīya Mahāsabhā seeking to bring the Hills and Plains of Assam within its orbit. Many Ryot Sabhās or Kisān Sabhās also sprang up in different parts of Assam to voice popular grievances and demand redress.

The growth of these organisations did not however affect the general popularity of the Congress. The 41st Session of the Indian National Congress was held at Pāṇḍu near Gauhati in December 1926 amidst great popular enthusiasm. The policy of opposition in the Councils was defined and more stress was laid on Khadi and the constructive programme in this session. The Assam leaders headed by T. R. Phookan and N. C. Bardoloi spared no pains to make this first session of the Congress in Assam a success.

Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32: By the end of 1929 India was on the threshold of another great struggle for freedom. The Congress declared in its Lahore Session held in December that year 'complete independence' to be the goal of the Congress fight for freedom. January 26 was henceforth to be observed as Independence Day. Congress members were directed to resign their seats in the Legislatures and preparations were made for the launching of a Civil Disobedience Movement including non-payment of taxes wherever possible. Assam's reactions to these decisions of the Congress were doubtful for some time because the Provincial Congress organisation was passing through an internal crisis at this time. But there was a spontaneous response on the 26th January 1930 for celebration of the Independence Day and when Mahatma Gandhi began his Salt Satyāgrha in April 1930 after the historic Dandi March, the Assam Congress was also ready to launch a mass Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam. Bishnurām Medhi as President of the Assam Provincial Congress conducted the movement and he was ably assisted by Hemchandra Baruā, a genius of the Assam Congress organisation, Omeo Kumār Dās, Dr. Bhubaneswar Baruā, Siddhināth Sarmā, Rājendranāth Baruā and many others. Defiance of ordinances and boycott of British goods were the principal features of the movement. The wheel of repression was set rolling by the agents of the Government and arrest and imprisonment of leaders and workers followed as before.

One distinctive feature of this movement in Assam was the general student unrest caused by the promulgation in May 1930 of a Circular by the then D.P.I. of Assam, Mr. Cunningham, requiring students and their parents and guardians to give an undertaking in writing that the students would not join in the political movement. The students in general had become conscious of their self-respect and the Circular was popularly denounced in large public meetings all over Assam. A number of schools like the Kamrup Academy at Gauhati were started at this time by the public at different places outside Government control. These schools still continue to run as monuments of protest against an invidious Circular which was intended to cripple the movement for Swarāj in Assam. In 1931 lull followed the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact after which Mahatma Gandhi agreed to attend the second session of the Round Table Conference as sole representative of the Congress. But Gandhiji returned to India empty-handed. The Congress Working Committee meeting on the 1st January 1932, decided to renew Civil Disobedience. The Government put Gandhiji under Arrest, declared the Congress to be an illegal body and promulgated repressive ordinances again in an attempt to crush the Congress. As in other provinces the Congress in Assam defied them and the movement started again followed by stern repression. The response of the people was generous but in the main it was the Congress Sevadal which brought credit to the movement in Assam. Assam's record of participation in this second phase of the Congress movement for freedom was thus kept high. In 1934 T. R. Phukan, the great leader of the 1921 movement in Assam and one of Assam's representatives to the Central Legislature since 1923 joined the congress Nationalist Party. But the people in general showed their adherence to the official Congress Party by electing Nabinchandra Bardoloi to the Central Legislature in 1934. Bardoloi had already played a distinguished role in the Assam Legislative Council and he soon made his mark in the Central Legislature also. It is a misfortune that this beloved leader of Assam passed away in 1936 deeply mourned by his country-men all over India. He was a real 'Karmavīr' a man of action, and people aptly adorned his name with this epithet.

In 1936 the Congress decided to work the reforms introduced by the Government of India Act of 1935. In Assam the Congress won 31 seats in a House of 108 forming the largest single group, and this success strengthened people's confidence in it as a non-communal body working for the whole nation. Gopinath Bardoloi was elected leader of the Congress Assembly Party. But it was Sīr Syed Md. Saadullā, the leader of the Muslim League Party who with the support of the European group and other tribal and non-tribal members, formed the Ministry in Assam. And while the Congress Ministries formed in the Congress majority provinces did good work and became popular, the Muslim League Ministry in Assam, depending as it did on doubtful pacts and compromises with reactionary elements for its continuance in office only strengthened the hands of the bureaucracy. The Congress party played its game adroitly and succeeded with the support of the Independents and Dissidents in dislodging the ministry from power in September 1938.

After this Gopināth Bardoloi as leader of the Congress party formed a Coalition Ministry in Assam with the support of a number of Independents and Muslim members outside the League who had been dissatisfied with the working of the Saadullā Ministry just voted out of power. The Congress President Subhāschandra Bose and Maulānā Ābul Kālām Āzād, member of the Congress Working Committee both came down to Shillong at this juncture to put the Coalition Ministry in office after studying the situation locally. T. R. Phookan whose sympahies were undoubtedly with the Congress although he had contested the Congress in the last election also played an important role in the negotiations. This was the last patriotic act of this great leader of versatile genius and uncommon parts whose minor differences with the Congress towards the last years of his life did not abate his zeal for service to secure the country's freedom. He was indeed the Desabhakta which his grateful countrymen called him as he passed away in 1939.

The Coalition Ministry was hailed with acclaim throughout the Province. The Ministry immediately set to initiate alleviating measures such as reduction of the land revenue due to extreme poverty, restriction of immigration into Assam and safe-guarding the interests of the indigenous population etc. But one of the most important achievements of the ministry was the measure relating to prohibition of opium and Omeo Kumar Das became the first Honorary Prohibition Commissioner to enforce the scheme of prohibition. Other important measures related to taxation the most contentious of which was the Agricultural Income Tax Act.

Individual Satyagraha Movement: In September 1939 the Second World War began and when India was made a party to the war by the British without consulting Indian public opinion, the Congress refused to be a party to Britain's imperialistic war and contribute to the war effort unless India's demand for freedom was conceded at least in a substantial form. By October-November 1939 the Congress Ministries in eight provinces including the Coalition Ministry in Assam resigned their offices thus creating a first class constitutional crisis in India. The Congress commenced in October 1940 a campaign of Individual Satyāgraha under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Assam immediately responded to this call for individual civil disobedience movement and prominent leaders and workers courted arrest and suffffered imprisonment. Gopināth Bardoloi, Bishnurām Medhi, Omeo Kumār Dās and many others carried on this unique movement in Assam with remarkable success. The movement was unique because it posed the moral aspect of the question of India's freedom. The campaign went on smoothly and by the end of 1941 the war approached the gates of India. The Japanese were rapidly advancing in Burma creating a general panic in this country and Britain's naval power was no longer able to hold its own in the Far East. The compulsion of events made the British Government conciliatory in its attitude to India and in March 1942 Sir Stafford Cripps a member of the British Cabinet was sent out to India for a solution of the Indian problem. But the mission ended in complete failure.

Quit India and the August Revolution of 1942: Events were moving fast and Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress ultimately came to the view that Britain must leave India to its fate. On August 8, 1942 the Congress Working Committee adopted the famous 'Quit India' Resolution at Bombay and decided on a mass struggle on the widest possible scale to compel Britain to leave India. The British Government was prepared for a show-down in India and the next day, on the 9th August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders of the Congress were arrested and put behind prison bars declaring the Congress to be an illegal body. The news of the arrest of the beloved leaders spread like wild fire and hartals, meetings and processions demanding their release marked popular resentment everywhere. The leaders had not had time to chalk out a clear-cut programme of resistance and it was left to the people to evolve their own programme keeping to the path of non-violence as enjoined by Mahatma Gandhi.

Assam which had passed through the baptism of fire in 1921 and again in 1930-32, did not lag behind other provinces in the historic struggle of 1942. With 'do or die' resolve the people jumped into vortex of the struggle unmindful of the shadow of the war at their very doors and unmindful of the hardships in their economic condition brought about by the war. The leaders, Tāyebullāh, F. A. Ahmed, B. R. Medhi, Debeswar Sarmā, Dr. H. K. Dās and some others were arrested on the 9th August 1942. Gopināth Bardoloi and Siddhinath Sarma who had gone to Bombay to attend the A.I.C.C. meeting were arrested on their return at Dhubri. Arrest of other leaders followed. The masses, left to themselves, decided their own line of action and they initiated a struggle of such tremendous magnitude that, at least for a few months, the functioning of the provincial Government was made almost impossible.

The Assam Congress had already made arrangements for building up an efficient Śānti Senā organisation. About 20,000 volunteers joined this organisation and their leaders were given regular training to meet any emergency arising out of the war. These Śānti Senās guarded the villages at night and whipped up the food production. Their services were later of immense help to evacuees from Burma at Manipur Road and other stations on the Assam Bengal Railway, Pandit Nehru, seeing a rally of these Śānti Senās at Boko, had said, "I would not forget easily the sight I have seen here". The people followed the usual methods of struggle but on a far larger scale than before. Police violence grew as people's power of resistance increased. Women also came out in their thousands and took active part in the movement and so did the students.

Parallel Government: People in general nurtured anger and hatred against the cureaucracy for the regime of repression and terrorisation that was enforced, and the rising high prices and food shortage aggravated their discontent. With an intense desire to be free as their guiding motive, the masses put forth a tremendous effort to paralyse the Government. Village Panchayets were formed everywhere and schmes of Panchayet administration were drawn up and enforced in some areas such as Bāhjāni, Bajāli, Hātichong, Rahā, Jāmuguri, Dhakuākhanā, Chatiā, etc., which behaved as independent units of a parallel Government for a sufficiently long time. Cases were heard and settled in these Panchayets and even jails were set up by some to punish bad elements. Supply to the military was stopped for more than a month and hāts and bāzārs closed down. The movement of rice from paddy growing areas was so controlled by local congress volunteers that it could not fall into the hands of the military or the Government order suppliers.

Havoc of repression : These facts showing the power of the masses to take the initiative made the authorities nervous and panicky and they sought to overawe the people and break down their morale by a ruthless repression. Provoked by atocities and excesses committed by the guardians of law and order under the ordinance-Raj the people on many occasions directed their activities against all kinds of communications and particularly against railways, aerodromes, telegraphs and telephones, attacking police stations and post offices and burning down or demolishing government buildings and bridges. Acts of Sabotage were however discouraged by top-ranking leaders of the congress like Omeo Kumār Dās. Many prominent workers and organisers of the movement like Sankar Baruā and Lakshmi Goswāmi went underground when the repression was tightened. The government let loose troops and the police on the country side. Many over-zealous and short-sighted native officers who possibly thought their fortunes were inalienably bound up with the British were guilty of unpardonable acts of violence on their own countrymen. Firing was widely resorted to in Nowgong, Tezpur, Goālpārā and Barpetā subdivisions. At least thirty men and women including a girl in her teens were killed as a result of these firings and many were seriously wounded. Kanaklatā, Tilak Dekā, Bhogeswari Phukanani, head the list of these martyrs. Men and women were indiscriminately and often mercilessly lathi-charged and assaulted by the police and the military for taking part in and demonstrations. Not less than fifty persons including some women received bayonet wounds. About 70 to 80 women were victims of heinons police outrage. The military was prominent in assaulting the people at the time of realising collective fines and in raiding volunteers' camps and villages.

All sorts of brutalities appear to have been perpetrated by the police. People were savagely belaboured, whipped and tortured, kicked and knocked down in police lock-ups.

Not less than a thousand persons were victims of such police savagery. The lathi-charging and cruel belabouring of political prisoners in the Jorhāt jail for satisfaction of a Jailor's caprices outdid many other acts of police vandalism. Nearly a hundred people received injuries in this unprovoked and calculated attack on prisoners within the precincts of the jail. Assault on students and arrest and imprisonment of hundreds of students for participating in the movement occupy a distinct place in the record of repression of the '42 movement in Assam. Forced labour was also exacted from villagers for guarding railway and telegraph lines and many were compelled to work as special constables in different areas. Levying of punitive tax or collective fines was another oppressive method extensively used by the Government ostensibly to prevent damage to Government property but in reality to supress the popular out-burst. Collective fines imposed amounted to Rs. 3,86,911, out of which Rs. 2,13,815 were realised. The number of people arrested, convicted and imprisoned or made security prisoners ran into thousands, the largest number being from the Nowgong district, the Midnapore of Assam, where the number arrested was 1,600, convicted, 1,200, and security prisoners, 60. Kushal Konwar and Kamalā Miri were two of the top-ranking martyrs of the 1942 struggle for freedom. Kushal Konwar was hanged for alleged implication in the Sarupathār train derailment case and Kamalā Miri a Satyāgrahi, fell ill in the jail and preferred death there to signing a bond for securing his release.

The League Ministry : The League Ministry of Sir Saadullā was in power in Assam during the frightful days of 1942 when a kind of anarchy prevailed throughout Assam owing to excesses committed by the guardians of peace, the misbehaviour of soliders who camped in different parts of the province, and the evils of corruption and blackmarketing of commodities which were fast spreading everywhere. There is no doubt that Sir Saadullā was a capable administrator but the separatist ideology of the Muslim League, the 'divide and rule' policy of the British and the arrogant attitude of the bureaucracy towards the people had their reflection on the administration which he headed at this time. The national revolt of 1942 terminated without achieving its objective, but the heroes and martyrs who sacrificed their all in accelerating the pace of the struggle for freedom would deserve the highest gratitude of the nation.

Victory of the Congress : In 1943 the advance to the very frontiers of Assam of the Azad Hind Fouz or the I.N.A. constituted under the leadership of Netāji Subhās Bose added further complications to the political situation in India raising new hopes and enthusiasm in the minds of a section of the people and causing fresh apprehensions of danger to the Government of India for sometime. The surrender of the Axis Powers to the Allies after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atom bombs had brought the Global War to an end. In the United Kingdom the Labour Party came to power. The new Government made an earnest effort to end the political dead-lock in India. Congress leaders who were clamped behind prison bars were released and preparations were made for general elections in India in the beginning of 1946.

As in the other provinces the Congress and the Muslim League swept the elections in Assam and the Congress came to power with Gopināth

Bardoloi as the Prime Minister. The new Ministry, though facing numerous problems of reconstruuction after the war, put an end to the regime which had strengthened the hands of communalism during the last decade. During the war-years when most Congressmen were in jail the Muslim League in Assam had carried on feverish activity in pursuance of its goal of Pakistan creating Hindu-Muslim tension in several quarters. When the Congress Minisrty came to power the Muslim League lost much of its influence.

The Cabinet Mission and the Grouping Plan: When the I.N.A. who had fallen into the hands of the British after the surrender of Japan, Indian political leaders deprecated this action and popular demonstrations were held at several places. Assam was proud to find that a number of young men from Assam had joined the ranks of the I.N.A. and distinguished themselves in their respective positions. In February 1946 Britain announced that three members of the British Cabinet would come to India to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, an early realisation of full self-Government in India. With the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in New Delhi began the birth-pangs of Free India in an atmosphere of great tension and suspicion between the principal political parties. Muslim League reaction to steps taken by the Viceroy in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's proposals to form an Interim Government in the Centre resulted in violent communal riots and massacres of innocent people in Bengal and Behar in 1946 and again in the Punjab in 1947.

The Dawn of Freedom: The Cabinet Mission's proposal to 'group' Assam with Bengal for creating a predominently Muslim zone in Eastern India like the one proposed to be set up in the west, was strongly resented in Assam. There was a storm of protest against this grouping plan from all quarters in Assam except the Muslim League. With the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi who sympathised with Assam's stand, Gopināth Bardoloi, the Prime Minister of Assam, succeeded in scrapping this part of the Cabinet Mission's plan. When power was ultimately transferred by the British to the people of India on the 15th August 1947, Assam emerged as a free unit of the Dominion of India which was soon transformed into the Republic of the Indian Union. Much to the regret of Congressmen everywhere India was divided into India and Pakistan, and as the result of a referendum held soon after, the district of Sylhet in Assam was transferred to Pakistan. Thus the battle for freedom was won and the hopes and aspirations of generations of Indians fulfilled. The story of the freedom struggle has a thrilling interest of its own and the unique character of the Congress struggle for freedom will inspire not only millions of Indians for generations to come but also all subject peoples in the world.

Gopināth Bardoloi became the first Chief Minister of free Assam and with great vision, ability and statesmanship he laid the foundations of a new and progressive Assam before he suddenly passed away in August

1950. He had endeared himself to all sections of the people in Assam and implanted in their hearts an unforgettable memory of his great personality and achievements. Another great leader of the Congress in Assam a man who had sacrificed his all, for the cause of freedom and had acted as guide, philosopher and friend to the Provincial Congress through stress and storm during the greater part of the last two decades was Hem Chandra Barua who passed away in 1943 before he saw the glow of freedom but not before he got the satisfaction of serving his mother-land to the very last breath of his life. Tyāgabir Hemchandra Baruā and Lokapriya Gopināth Bardoloi live in all their greatness in the memory of the people of Assam.

The Folktales of Assam

By

PRAPHULLADATTA GOSWAMI

Assam's folktales seem to remind us of the affiliations of the culture of this part of India. For example, Puranic tales have been absorbed even by Adivasis. The Panchatantra tale Mouse Maid Made Mouse Again has been recorded among Angami Nagas though it has not been heard among plainsmen Assamese. A few Assamese tales show affinities to Jataka tales. Some of the tales of the State show a close relationship with tales recorded by Verrier Elwin in Gond areas or by Bompas in Santal areas. Some of the trickster tales so popular all over Assam seem to be a Mongoloid contribution and have parallels outside the State, in Burma, China and even in Russia, thus suggesting race migration. A tale recorded for the first time from some Adivasi area is later found to have parallels in other parts of India, indicating thus that the lower culture of this vast land is interlinked.

Assam seems to be very rich in folktale material, for besides the Assamese speaking population the Adivasis dwelling in the plains and hills also have their interesting stores of folktales. Some of these have been recorded, two important recent collections being D. S. Rongmuthu's *Garo Folktales* and Verrier Elwin's *Myths of North-East Frontier*, but a great deal of work remains to be done. Assamese tales began to be collected from about the first decade of this century, but as yet we have had no definitive collection. This has prevented the student of culture from examining adequately the interplay of the cultural layers that has gone on in this part of India for hundreds of years. The study of folktales is repaying not only on technical grounds but also instructive for the deeper understanding that it gives of men and cultural patterns.

There are various types of tales, of which the Märchen or wonder tale is the most popular, as elsewhere in the world. There are moral tales, tales about birds and beasts, and those that explain natural phenomena, but those which give pure pleasure and treat of the world of imagination have the widest currency, for example, the trickster tales centring round Teton (or Tentan). The interest lies in the comparative impunity with which Teton goes on cheating others and thus carves out a fortune for himself. Teton seems to have a cycle to himself. Some of the adventures attributed to him may not adhere to a pattern and may be narrated independently. As an illustration let us take Motif K 362.10 : "Give him what he wants, etc" : In one of the Teton tales the lad finds a man ploughing under the blazing sun. He advises the man to smear the bullocks with cool mud. When this is done the bullocks move faster. Teton comes to know that the man has a score of rupees ready at home to buy a better pair of bullocks. He feigns thirst and as he stoops to drink the muddy water of the field, the ploughman directs him to go to his house and ask his wife for some water. Teton says, "Supposing she didn't give ?" "Oh, cry out to me," says the man. Teton then goes to the man's house and tells the mistress, "Brother has asked you to give me that score ot rupees kept for a new pair of bullocks for I have sold him a pair." When she does not give him the money he points to the white-looking bullocks in the field, "See, aren't they white ? Your old pair was red." Even then finding woman suspicious Teton cries out, "Hei Brother, she won't give." The man shouts back, "Hei, you deserving to go into the tiger's maw, why don't you give ?" He thinks it is water. So the woman brings out the money and keeping one rupee gives the rest to Teton with which he makes off. Now, cheating of this type is seen in a Burmese tale. In this Master Z desires to give gratis a piece of roasted pig to a miser who is in his garden. Master Z declares he will bring a pot from the miser's house and to do so and going in tells the housewife, "Aunt, here is my roast pig which your husband has agreed to exchange with his bundle of gold pieces." As she won't bring out the gold, he cries out, "Uncle, she won't give it to me." The man shouts back and his wife misunderstanding him gives the money to the lad. This motif is found both among the Assamese and the Mikir Adivasis.

Again take Motif A 1611 : "Origin of particular tribes" : The ancestor of the Nagas had three sons. The old man asked them, "What will you do for your living ?" The first answered, "I shall till the soil." The second answered, "I shall be a writer." The third's answer was, "I shall be a hunter." From the tiller of the soil were born the Nagas ; the hunter disappeared in the forest ; the writer or the one who knew reading and writing became the ancestors of the Assamese.

Thus, indexing of motifs sometimes indicates a tale's affiliations, sometimes a social attitude. Sometimes a tale is apologetic like the Naga tale given above, which is on the border-line between legend and myth. Several NEFA Adivasi groups and some people in South-East Asia give the explanation for their illiteracy by saying that the skin on which Goc had inscribed their letters got destroyed somehow.

Folktales and some ballads having an early origin have many motifs in common. Janagabharur Git deals with the quest of the prince Gopichan for the princess Jana who herself rules a kingdom. The princess sets him tasks (he also sets her one) and on his performing these his victory chiefly lies. Performance of difficult tasks and quest is a noted feature of many folktales. Motif H 373 : "Bride test : performance of tasks" is seen, for example, in Janagabharur Git, where Gopichan sets the amazon princes the task : "Cook on your knees the rice which does not grow on any plant, which is not husked and which is not touched by the hand." This is also a task contrary to the nature of objects (H 1023). In the legend of Radhika Santi we find the Motif : "Special powers of chaste woman carrying water in a sieve" (H 413. 3). In this way, even some ballads are seen to have the material usual in the wonder tale.

One of the most interesing groups of tales is that having affiliations to the world-famous Cinderella group. The Assamese representative is Teja and Teji which agrees with part of AI and part of AII of the Oriental type as analysed by Mrs. Rooth. Another well-known tale which describes the cruelty of a step-mother is Tejimala on which a film is being made. It can be analysed as follows :

Stepmother persecutes stepdaughter
Stepdaughter wants to attend marriage
Stepmother gives clothes she mischievously has spoiled
Stepdaughter blamed, murdered and buried
Plants grow on grave (one after another) and speak of crime
They are cut down and at last thrown into river
Lotus grows on river
Father only can pluck flower or flower changes into bird and comes to him
Stepmother tested and found guilty, punished.

This tale seems to have parallel in the Malto tale The Cruel Sisters-in-law and the Oriya The Hideworker's Daughter. In The Cruel Sisters-in-law when her brothers are away, her seven sisters-in-law annoy Basumata in all possible ways. They set her to husk paddy and manage to crush her head. She is buried and a chilli plant grows on the grave. One of the sisters-in-law comes to pick chillis and the plant sings out :

Do not pluck, do not pluck the chillies, sister,
Basumata was killed for an *amaralata sari*.

The girl had asked her brothers to bring her an *amaralata* sari. The chilli plant is uprooted and thrown away. Where it falls a kadam tree grows. When the seven brothers return they take rest under the kadam and as one of them plucks a leaf the tree cries out as before. They cut down the tree, discover their sister and later kill their wives. In the Oriya tale a princess thrown into a well by the hideworker's daughter turns into a lotus which later turns into a gourd creeper. When the impostor cooks a gourd, it cries out :

I am a gourd,
From the hideworker's daughter
O King, what do you eat ?

The gourds are thrown away and a tree with sour fruit grows up. When the prince splits a fruit the princess (and true bride) comes out. The impostor is killed.

In the Assamese tale Tejimala in her plant transformations (gourd, chilli or sour fruit) cries out like this :

> Do not reach out, do not pluck the gourd
> O beggar, wherefrom do you come,
> For the silks my stepmother crushed me,
> Tejimala I am.

So it seems these tales, particularly the Assamese and Malto parallels, indicate an interesting type, without, so far as I am aware, any European analogue. If we could collect enough variants of these tales and trace geographically their relationship we might come on interesting results : their probable earlier eype, its origin, routes of dissemination and the nature of modifications.

It is interesting to note that some Assamese tales have close parallels in Gond and Santal areas. For example, the Assamese The Gingerseller and the Blackpepper seller and the Muria Two Clever Cheats. The Assamese tale can be analysed thus :

(a) Two cheats exchange certain articles as genuine and both find themselves cheated
(b) They turn friends and go out in search of fotune
(c) They enter service : one has to tend an unruly cow and the other to water a tulsi plant planted above a well
(d) They find wealth in the well and while pushing it up the one who is below gets into one of the sacks
(e) Meaning to cheat his friend the one on top makes off with the sacks
(f) While he stops on the way the other secures the money and runs away. Thus he—the blackpepperseller—gets the better of the other.

All these motifs are found in the Muria tale, only one or two are handled in a different way. (1) Instead of tending a cow and pouring water on a tulsi, the Muria cheats plough with a pair of unruly bullocks and bring water in a pot full of holes. (2) Instead of finding wealth in a pit under the tulsi, they persuade their mistress to put her wealth in their custody and this they place in a well. (3) The wealth which they are given is not wealth but a heap of stones : the discovery is made by the one below the well, but instead of passing on the information he himself sits in the basket and his partner above makes off with it meaning to cheat the other. The greater rogue comes out of the basket only at the house of the lesser rogue. As there is no actual money, they divide what they have earned in certain shady ways not mentioned in this analysis.

One of the friends in each tale proves himself superior, though in the Assamese tale the gain is monopolized by the superior rogue. The first part of the Bengali tale Adventures of Two Thieves as narrated by Lal Behari Day is closely related to these tales, though with local variations, but the second part—dealing with the adventures of the sons of the old veterans—has neither any Muria nor Assamese parallel. This second part has to be traced to the tale of Ghata and Karpara as told by Somadeva and which probably has its earliest version in the tale of Rhampsinitus as narrated by Herodotus.

The formula tale is another interesting type. Such tales are probably not many, for the Assamese have only a few while several of the tribes have slightly larger number. In a formula tale the pattern is more important than the plot as such and in some of them are explained why some animals have come to have such and such characteristics, thus indicating etiology. The Assamese, the Crow and the Wren has parallels elsewhere in northern India and among the Baigas. In the Assamese tale the crow is asked to have its beak washed and the bird visits one after another the sea, the potter, the clay, the buffalo, the dog, the cow, the grass, and the blacksmith. In the Baiga tale the crow approaches one by one the well, the potter, the dear, the dog, the buffalo, the grass, and the blacksmith. In the Assamese tale the blacksmith wants fire and the bird while procuring it gets burned ; in the Baiga tale the blacksmith gives a redhot sickle and it kills the bird. The Assamese tale ends with the death of the crow while the Baiga tale also has the reverse accumulation. There is also a Burmese version of this tale.

Another formula found among the Kukis, Mikirs and the Miris is The Ant and the Frog. The frog obstructs the ant's passage and therefore is bitten. This sets moving a chain of accidents (Motif Z 49.6 . . .), finally in the frog's back becoming rough and spotted and the ant's waist getting waisted. The Sangtams of NEFA have a similar tale : An owl asks his friend the monkey to get some fire from a bee's nest. The monkey starts weeping when the bees bite him. At this a squirrel throws a fruit at him (to him ?). It falls on the head of a sleeping snake. The snake runs to a hole and a boar is scared away. A banana tree gets broken. A bat flies off and enters the ear of an elephant. The scared elephant knocks down a bounder. It rolls down and breaks a leg of a bird catching fish in the stream. The bird out of anger passes stool on a shrimp. The angered shrimp damages a weir built by two brothers. They ask the fish, "Why have you broken our weir ?" . . . So the chain of actions is traced back and the owl is punished so that his body becomes small and the head remains large. So these formula tales have etiological features. They also illustrate that interesting feature of folk-ballads—incremental repetition. . . .

Let me wind up this essay by reminding my readers that folktales in these days of science fiction need not just be grist to the mill of the folklorist or the culturist : they have their perennial human interest and even relevance in a world where a money economy is the rule. Take for instance this tale recorded in a Bodo speaking area : An old man begins to be neglected by his sons and daughters-in-law. He is not tended well and given proper and timely meals. He confides his sorrows in a friend. The friend lends him twenty rupee coins, asks him to shut his door, and go on counting them continuously. He does so. His sons and daughters-in-laws hear the jingle of coins and take a new interest in the old man. They start treating him better. The money is later returned to the friend.

Now, this tale of Bodo wisdom (P 236.2) is not typically Bodo, for it has parallels in Ceylon and in some parts of India. In the Ceylonese version an old woman tricks her cruel daughter-in-law into treating her well by pretending she has a bag of money.

Aspects of Society
As Reflected in the Bihu Songs of Assam

By

S. BISWAS

With a twentieth century outlook of urban culture, it is indeed difficult to make a correct estimate of the life and society as revealed in the folk-lierature which depicts the will and aspirations of the people of the by-gone days. The folk-literature and the folk religion give an impression of the dynamic forces of an integrated society that had been operating as the living experience of the poeple of a given community at a particular period of history. In fact, if the thoughts and sentiments revealed therein do not come down to us as an unbroken tradition, the folk-literature may be deemed as a record of the past; and as such it becomes an inspiring source of the study of the cultural history.

The Bihu song of Assam as a type of folk-poetry has, as in the folk-poetry of other people a "social content" and "economic aim". These songs, and the dance and rituals associated with them had been playing a lively rôle on the life and experience of an agricultural community. The poetry combined with dance, music and ritual—cited or dramatically enacted with a belief in the power of words and magical practices became, to speak in the language of Caudwell, "the switchboard of the instinctive energy" of the people.[1] The Bihu festival of song and dance has to a great extent become, to confess candidly about all modern-day festivals of the urban population, divorced from the original spirit and faith. With the gradual decay of the argicultural society the solidarity and integrity of the village society have to a considerable degree waned. The agricul-ural people by this time realise that they can no longer turn to the spirit of Nature for their economy and wealth. Their old belief in a tie between the human and the vegetable worlds has been shattered. "To them the principle of life and fertility whether animal or vegetable was one and indivisible."[2] But the impelling forces—social, political and economic gradually stole away their traditional and age-old faith and practice, customs and conventions.

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[1] *Illusion and Reality*, p. 25.

[2] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 325.

So far as the theme of poetry and the underlying conception are concerned, the folk-poetry of Assam which go by the name of the Bihu songs has a university in asmuch as the basic thought and desire, and the enactments and ritual practices for the attainment of desire were followed with a pious belief by the people of the old-world; even now the same are seriously and reverentially observed by primitive tribes and by a people who are still in a rural atmosphere. The song-drama centers around harvesting. "This world was fashioned by Brahmā with a desire for food,"[3] and this materialistic desire is at the root of the conception and philosophy of the agricultural cults which find a lyrical expression in the Bihu songs of Assam.

Here we do not propose to go deep into the underlying conception and philosophy of the cult of fertility. Only a general summary review may perhaps be casually put in here. The fundamental basis of the Bihu is materialistic in spirit and action. The people of an agricultural society depends solely on the produce of the soil, and a good harvest depends on the smiling favour of Nature. So they turn to the spirits and godlings of Nature and implore them to be graceful and benign to them. This is a dramatic prayer. The collective emotion of the people finds expression in song and dance; and the magical practices and ritual enactments are projected in all seriousness with a view to drawing the forces of Nature on their behalf. This is how the folk-religion and folk-poetry grow out of a basic materialistic outlook of the people. "Emotion is artificially stimulated and probably is felt to be necessary in order to sustain illusion."[4] From an ultimate economic aim a phantastic world is thus artificially created and in this way "illusion grows out of reality"[5] These illusory techniques adopted for an expected promotion of fertility to soil pass in the agricultural society by the name of sacred rites of the Social Religion. This is the fundamental setting of the song-festival which did not develop in a conscious social order.

There is a still deeper aspect of the whole thing. In the concrete state of the society this primary want of the means of subsistence is a material and physical feeling. The harvest is their wealth, and a medium of exchange, and so they count much upon the favour of the impersonal forces whose existence and potential power are to them real and unquestionable. The guiding spirits of nature must, therefore, be appeased otherwise there might be draught, there might be bad or no harvest. In different parts of the globe and in the ancient society of the Vedic Aryans as well, there was another aspect of the agricultural ritual. That is, they did not simply offer their prayers to the unseen forces, some enactments were either

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[3] *Maitri-Upaniṣad*, 6.12, cited by Robert Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads.*

[4] Carveth Read, *Man and His Superstitions*, p. 35.

[5] Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*, p. 25.

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expressed or actually taken recourse to through song and dance, through rites and practices so that the fertility of the soil might be encouraged and enhanced. The girls or the women often in person and more so as the "dramatic personæ" in the song-drama perform rain-dance, sing appropriate songs, play the rôle of planting seedlings and do, or rather pretend to do, such other enactments as, as the physiological qualities characteristic to womenfolk, are expected to work sympathetically to bring out some physical change in the Mother Earth leading to fertilization and finally production. The sex-rite and fertility-cult, as reflected very symbolically in the Bihu songs, would also point to a still more abstract sentiment of the people than a mere petition or prayer. The incorporation of and blending of the human qualities with the characteristics of the Nature gods of the sky and the earth is indeed a very interesting development of human thought. This cult though very ancient and world-wide finds a very suggestive lyrical expression in the Bihu songs of Assam. So the Assamese Bihu songs have become a rich wealth of symbolical poetry. The physical aspect of the love-song does not precisely leave any pointed reference to the sex-cult, and the finer sentiments and the philosophical aspects have often been touched upon very subtly ; and this artless expression of thought and desire of the agricultural community, of the mirth and pleasure of men and women has by the inherent quality and nascent simplicity of the same became very artistic and never artificial.

The Second consideration of a folk-poetry lies in estimating the social facts. As the folk-poetry is attuned to the music of earth and is a popular expression of the will and woes of the people, it becomes a very dynamic and potent vehicle of the material facts of the life of the people whom it concerns. The Bihu songs of Assam, therefore, enable the readers to know the people and their society as a whole. The folk-poetry in this respect is a complementary source to the study of social history. It should, however, be borne in mind that the estimation about the custom and institutions of the agricultural village-community as reflected in the folk-poetry, i.e., the Bihu songs, must not be taken as a definite and final standard of judgment and assessment of the aspects of society as a whole. The remarks with regard to a particular aspect, say caste-discipline, might have been confined to one or the other region, and the songs bearing such references might be carrying stamps of time and place. Take, for example, the references to the usage of accepting the bride-price. In the Assamese village community of the olden days, this usage might have prevailed as a general principle or it might have been confined to some people only. There is, however, nothing new about it ; even in ancient Hindu society bride-price was accepted in a particular type of marriage-system. This was not, of course, a generally accepted and respected usage. Dr A. S. Altekar says[6], "There are a few cases of Asura marriages recorded in ancient Indian tradition. In Vedic times the custom of bride purchase was known, but not held in esteem." The usage has been condemned in a Bihu song by one who finds that the bride-price is too high for him to pay[7] :

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[6] A. S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, p. 39.

Money would you have,
You send untold generations to hell,
Of your own life too you make a mess.

There is a significant reference to paying the price in terms of paddy. In agricultural society cattle and paddy serve as the medium of exchange or were taken as the standard of wealth. So was it in Assam.[8] The parents and the girls of marriageable age wanted to assess the wealth of the expected groom. The amount of the bride-price was an index to the economic status of the party. So the girl asks,[9]—

dhunīyā piliṅgā moke niba khoja
kimān dhane diba pāra?

(How much money can you spend that you want me?)

The agricultural society of Assam expresses its deep feeling of attachment to weaving. In their harvest songs they draw points of comparision from their village industry and, at the same time, expose to view the seniment and sanctity they attribute to it as a customary occupation of the girls and women. "The handloom has so closely been related to the life and thought of Assamese women that the latter have inevitably drawn upon this institution for imagery to express some of their deepest feelings."[10] In the Bihu song the wife weaves the skirt and breast-cloth for herself and a jacket for her beloved with the cotton that has been brought from the Mishmi land by the latter (P. G., II. 47). The practice of spinning and weaving often finds a beautiful poetic expression in the songs of love[11] :

The more you twine it, the more it gets twined,
Love is the thread of attachment.

The comparision and symbolism drawn from the commonly known things of life or the things and objects familiar to the people under agricultural economy reveal the material culture of the people. The loom of cloth, for example, has been significantly compared to the loom of love.

The box is trodden upon by the big-cloth,
My body is trodden upon by love.

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[7] P. Goswami, *Bihu Songs of Assam*, IV. 8.
[8] P. C. Choudhury, *History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam*, p 387.
[9] P. G. II. 121/IV. 6, p. 387.
[10] P. G., Introduction, p. 36.
[11] ibid, 11.4.

These songs which reveal the sentiment and passion of love and attachment are deeply related to the fertility cult.

The areca-nut is produced abundantly in Assam and the frequent mention* of it points to the social beliefs, customs, omens and magic. Read the following passages and you will understand as William Crooke observed in his *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* that some material objects were held sacred and auspicious.

Since I look the arecanut
You have I come to know—11. 54.
I shall have arecanut at your gate
And leave the peel as a sign.—11. 51.

The Bihu song may also serve as a helpful guide to peep into the past conditions of the caste order. The caste-discipline and a strict adherence to the social division might have stood in the way of free union between boys and girls, and so this has been a point of reference. The rigorous system and a strong and persistent conservatism in this regard have often been lamented by the lovers in the Bihu songs. In spite of pining restlessness the lovers cannot unite because of the caste barrier. There is a tragic note of disappointment and despair,—

I wish I cast in my lot with you
But you belong to a lower caste.[12]

Sometimes, however, the social order and human instinct are at war ; the social injunction would prevent the lovers from doing something which might be considered by society as a scandalous blemish or an irreligious act. So the lover says,—[13]

I won't take areca-nut split by you, dear,
I might loose my caste.

Therefore, even if the passion is roused, even though there is an ardent feeling of attachment, the unsophisticated boys and girls of the agricultural village community think that the injunction of society is but a decree of fate and that they are to submit to it.

We are being kept apart
By so dissembling a fate.

and, "it's Fate who creates and it is He who preserves," so,

If you and I are fated to pair
He alone will make out nest.

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* P. G. II—49, 51, 55, 73 ; III-4, 11, 32 etc. II. 98 is very suggestive.

[12] ibid., II. 139.

[13] ibid., II. 50.

and, on the other hand when "Fate has decreed our pairing" the village pandit is ready with almanac in hand to settle up the union.[14]

The Kalitās are ranked in the higher order of the caste-system and "their social relations, marriage rules, etc., conform to the orthodox Hindu rules.[15] But the urge of love may sweep away all physical obstacles, and consideration of caste may be of little significance. So a Kalitā lover says,—[16]

> If you so desire, if I desire,
> What can the Kalitā caste do?

In an extreme case, even if one is supposed to be dead in the eyes of the parents and relatives because of falling a prey to such an "unsocial" love the boy and the girl prefer to be united at the cost of the social privileges and ties which they are to forgo for ever.

The girls and the women in a village community are not considered burdens of the family. In fact, agriculture was primarily the function of the women and that is why the so-called fertility-cult as an agricultural ritual came to be associated with the women. The rites and practices of the agricultural festival developed with the women's participation in the agricultural operations. The village is said to be adorned by women[17] not so much because of their aesthetic appeal but because of their active participation for the well-being of the family and the society. The Assamese agricultural community was no exception to this concrete fact. The social set-up and complex that developed in the educated and 'cultured' society about the physical inability of women are of a later date.[18] The Bihu song is eloquent on this aspect because the agricultural society everywhere is quite alive to the functional necessity of women. Indeed she is identified with the Mother Earth, and she is also represented as the metaphorical cow. The rôle of women in the agricultural society has, comprehensively speaking, become the human basis of the Bihu songs. So the village-man feels it so sad to give them away[19]. This is not merely an expression of affectionate tender feeling; the village parents in a typical rural economy are more realistic than we may think of. Though as a matter of principle, the father is to marry his daughter in time, yet he strikes a note of lament—

> With infinite pains I bring up my daughter.
> Her services are enjoyed by others.[20]

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[14] References may be made to P. G. II 67, 68, 69 and 79.

[15] P. C. Choudhury, p. 340.

[16] P. G., II 140.

[17] P. G., IV. 1.

[18] Briffault, *The Mothers* (abridged edition); see chapter on Primitive Economic Conditions.

[19] P. G., IV. 2.

[20] P. G., IV. 9.

The father counts much on her services, so it is evident that this is not a parental feeling of affection, but a materialist's loss. The 'loss' has in the previous lines been compared with the loss of mustard which was raised with infinite pains and which was eaten up by cows. To summarise our views on this point, it will be profitable to quote Briffault,[21]—"The sole form of wealth and of economic power consists, at those primitive social stages, in power to produce. The economic advantage which such power bestows is wholly in favour of the women, for women in primitive society, far from being economically unproductive and therefore dependent, are on the contrary in the highest degree producers of wealth, and are indeed the chief producers." The position was, however, not exactly so in the Indian villages of the Aryan community, but the basic fact cannot be denied. That the daughter is brought up with infinite plains is only a parental defence as to why he should expect some money in lieu. "For money is the daughter fed."[22] The daughter at her tender age was a helpmate of her father,[23] —"You made me a fish-pouncer, O father", —and as a wife she is helping the husband and the family, does the act of planting and reaping, and at times sits on weaving.[23]

The earlier social instincts of humanity, which constitutes the bond that knits the village community and actuate its collective mentality, thus affording the conditions of all human, mental and social developments have been seriously upset by various external factors. The self-sufficiency and solidarity of a quiet agricultural environment suffered sweeping change. There are stray references to the changing condition of the society in the body of the songs. The social, economic and mental set-up of the individual as well as the community had a violent blow and consequently the aspects of the old society had considerably been affected. There is a pathetic and yet a very expressive reference to the introduction to foreign yarn suggesting a foreign influence on the mind of the consort "who did not give his mind to her".[24] "The Company's steamer throbbing in the heart of the river" and "shaking the earth" symbolises as it were the advent of a machine-era which has given a terrible 'shake up' in the constitution of the society with far-reaching consequences.[25] Then again the dissolute character of the European tea-gardeners has been vividly exposed, and its consequent effect on the economy and morals of the people has also implied[26] a change in the phase of the cultural aspect of the old agricultural society.

[21] Briffault, *The Mothers,* Vol. I, p. 435. Chapter IX

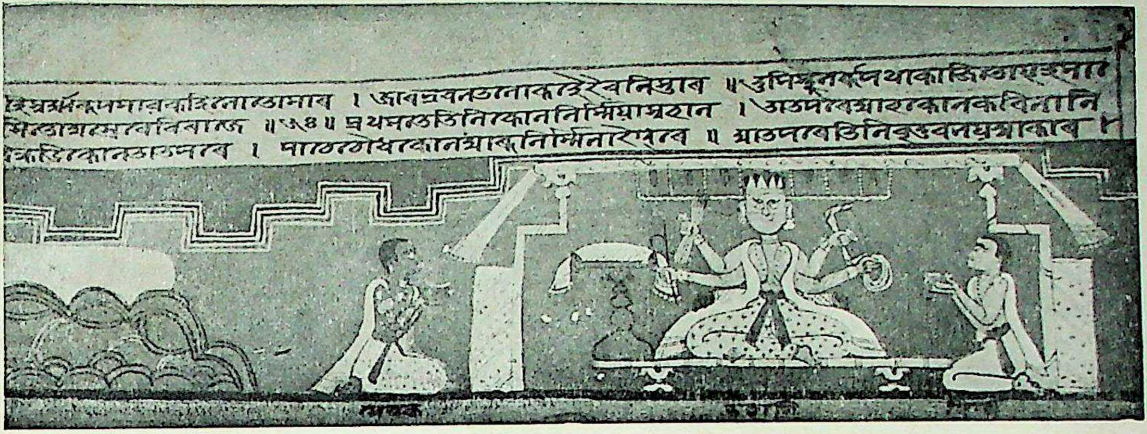
[22] "dhanalai tulile *ji*", P. G., IV. 6, p. 171.

[23] P. G., IV., 5 ; II 44, 108 ; vide *The Mother* Vol. I, pp. 448-463 ; W. Crooke, p. 50.

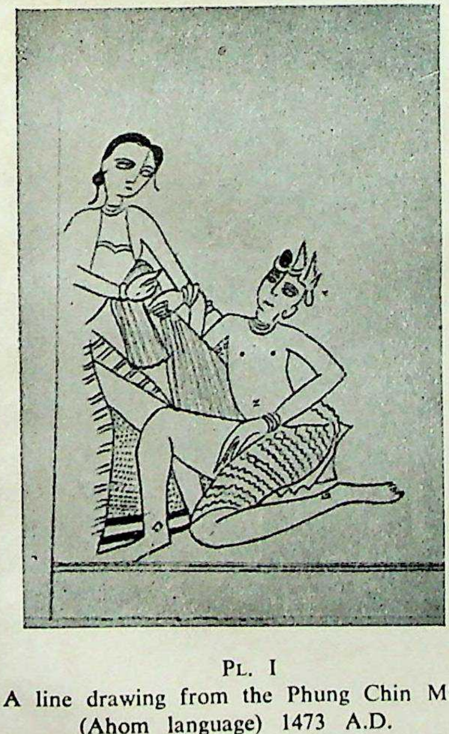
[24] P. G., II 48.

[25] ibid., II 45, 86.

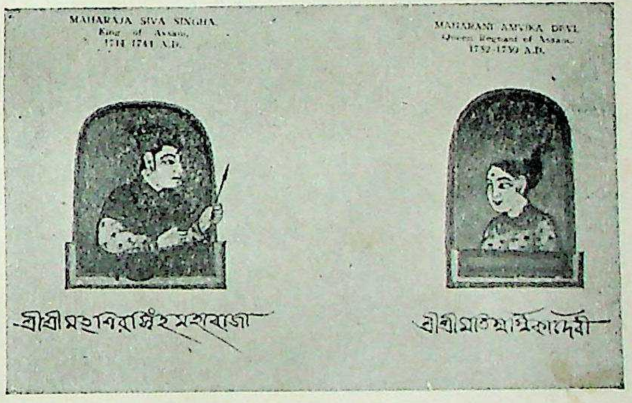
[26] ibid., IV. 22, 23, 24.



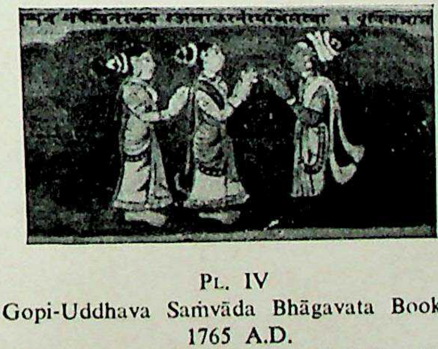
Pl. II
The worship of Bhavani Devi Ānanda Laharī MS. c. 1714-'44 A.D.
By courtsey of Assam State Museum, Gauhati.



Pl. I
A line drawing from the Phung Chin MS.
(Ahom language) 1473 A.D.
By courtsey of Sri Chaikhong let Gohain


MAHARAJA SIVA SINGHA
King of Assam,
1714-1744 A.D.
MAHARANI AMVIKA DEVI
Queen Regnant of Assam,
1732-1739 A.D.
শ্ৰীশ্ৰী মহাশিৱসিংহ মহাৰাজা
শ্ৰীশ্ৰী মাতৃঅম্বিকাদেৱী

Pl. III



Pl. IV
Gopi-Uddhava Saṁvāda Bhāgavata Book X
1765 A.D.
By courtsey of the Gauhati University

The Art of Book Illustration in Assam

By

RAJATANANDA DAS GUPTA

The art of book illustration in Assam had remained a sealed book to the art historian of India. Although the earliest extant examples of illustrated manuscripts belong to the 16th century, the literature of India tesifies to the existence of this art in much earlier times. The *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa, a 7th century work, has the earliest reference to the production of manuscript on the bark of the Aguru tree (Aquilaria Agalocha) from Assam during the days of king Bhāskaravarman.

In the sixteenth century two great religious movements, both, waves of neo-Vaisnavism rock the foundation of society in eastern India. The first under Śaṅkaradeva was directly responsible for the revival of painting in Assam in a style akin to the Apabhramsa school, and termed the Sattriyā school due to its nativity in the sattras or the vaiṣṇava monasteries of Assam and Cooch Behar. From now onwards paper is also used for manuscripts along with the ever popular sāñcipāt or bark of the Aquillaria Agalocha tree. Manuscripts were also made of silk and Mugā fabric. This eloquent style continued even up to the 19th century though a century earlier a provincial Moghul school had already grown at the Āhom capitals of Gargāon and Rangpur.

During the period under review we find the word puthi in use in Assamese. Manuscripts with illustrated borders were known as latā-katā puthi[1] or manuscripts with scrolls and running motifs along the borders. But illustrations in the more important manuscripts like the Bhāgavata VI., were termed Pratimā. The colophon of the said manuscript has the words Pratimā to mean illustrations, viz., yār samīpat gaṅgā dévir sadṛśakāyā divya alankāre maṇḍitā Śrī amvikā dévī prakāśa karichā.........ādeśaka śirogata kari vadha ligirāyé Pratimā sahite likhāila......... śaka 1659.[2]

In Assam the painter was known by the most popular name *khanikar*. "A Khanikar could be a sculptor, an engraver, a carpenter, a maker of earthen images; a painter; a class of Pāiks (labourers under the Āhom kings) whose principal duty was to paint, make images, etc." Actually, the

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[1] Maheswar Neog, *The Art of Painting in Assam*, Gauhati, 1959.

[2] *Bhāgavata*, Book VI, a single folio available at the Department of Histori-and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati.

Khanikars were a professional group and never a caste group. "Muslim artisans and craftsmen were incorporated in the Khanikar-khel or the guild of artisans under a superintendent known as the Khanikar Baruā."[3]

In this way the Muslim painters trained in the metropolitan school of Delhi settled in Assam and produced works which did rival the parent school in no time. "The greatest land-mark in the age-long contact between Assam and the Islamic world, is, however, the gorgeously illustrated Assamese MS. Hastividyārṇava, compiled by Sukumar Bar Kāth in 1734 A.D. under the order of King Śiva Singha and his chief queen Ambikā Dévi......... The drawings are the handi-work of two painters, Dilbar, a Muslim and Dosāi, a Hindu".[4]........... Muslim Khanikars received state patronage even to the last days of Āhom rule as we find from the *Report on the Province of Assam*, by Mills in 1884. "One family of Muslim Khanikars was supported by the state even as late as the days of Purṇānanda Burhāgohāin."[5] "As regards the institutions for training in Khanikarship there was no fixed centre just as in the case of the arts like music and the various crafts etc."[6] Eminent teachers taught pupils who gathered round them usually in their own homes. It was the typical oriental system of education where the teacher and not the institution was more important. This system prevailed not only in the rest of India but also in the entire Asia in medieval times.

"The village Khanikar enjoyed an important position in the cultural life of the people. Without him no 'Bhāonā' or theatricals could be imagined. For, he not only painted the scenes and sets but also dressed the actors and designed their costumes and accessories. Masks or Mukhās were also made by him for superhuman roles or for Hanuman and other semihuman beings. He had derived his inspiration and perfected his skill in the arts from an accoumulated fund of hereditary knowledge".[7] According to the socio-economic structure of the Āhom days the Khanikars were also formed into a khel or guild under a superintendent known as the Khanikar Baruwā.

The various schools of miniature paintings that flourished in Assam since the 16th century with the rise of neo-vaiṣṇavism under Śaṅkaradeva are practically unknown to Indian historians and art critics. The court school of Assamese miniatures that developed during the early 18th century to rival the Pāhāri and the Moghul examples. As everywhere painted manuscripts in Assam had been the result of patronage of royal families and nobles. Here one more agent that had been active in the patronage of painting was the sattra or Vaiṣṇava monastery.

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[3] S. K. Bhuyan, *The Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, p .18.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 19.

[5] Saiyad Muhibul Hudain, 'asamīyā musalmān', *Āwāhan*, IV, i, p. 8.

[6] S. K. Bhuyan, *Āhomar Din*, p. 61.

[7] *Aṅkīyā Nāṭ*, ed. B. K. Barua, intro., pp. xxv-f.

The neo-vaiṣṇavism as preached by Śrī Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.) was a link in the chain of similar movements raising their heads of protest against the degenerate religious practices and caste exploitation in mediaeval India. "It also brought in its wake a renaissance in Assam specially in the field of social reorganisation, art, literature and culture. But the renaissance which had its beginnings in the activities of Śaṅkaradeva has wrought itself into fulfilment in many ways, and marked out a definite place for Assam in the cultural map of India."[8] "The official name of the Bhakti creed of Śaṅkaradeva is Ekaśaraṇanāmadharma and this explains its cardinal principles, which enjoins worship of one god, i.e., Viṣṇu, specially in the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and indicates its main form, which consists of the utterance of the holy names of the god in the singing of songs in his glorification."[9] The sattras resemble to a certain extent the vaiṣṇavite maṭhas and ākhārās of other parts of India.

The important sattras of Assam are those of Barpeṭā, Bāli in Nowgong district, Āunīāṭi, Garamūr and Dakhiṇpāṭ in the district of Sibsāgar and situated on the island of Mājuli. "Functions of the Sattra institution may be classified into two categories, viz., primary and secondary. Its primary functions are to propagate Vaishnavism based on monotheistic principle, to initiate disciples, to provide ethico-devotional codes and rules of conduct for the neophytes and to hold religious festivals on different occasions............ The secondary functions of the Sattras are to see that good social relation is maintained among the villagers, to develop the spirit of cooperation to provide adequate facilities for the dissemination of ancient learning and to dispense justice on all social and religious controversies.[10] Educational and cultural activities that fall within the second category are most important for us.

"The art of book-illustration by means of miniature was scrupulously cultivated by unknown painters living within the religious atmosphere of certain sattras. The epics and the purāṇas were generally illustrated and pictures are available in all combination of colours. The artists were more concerned with his narratives than with the exhibition of his accomplishment."[11]

Patronage by the Tuṅgkhuṅgīyās :

"The House of Tuṅgkhuṅg was established with the coronation of Tāoshān in Lakni Raishan, i.e., 1681 A.D. The family adopted its name from Tiṅgkhoṅg or Tuṅgkhoṅg its ancestral village. The era opened for Assam was of great political triumphs and cultural activities including patronage to art and architecture. Tāoshān the grandson of Chāo-Shukhām accended the Holong and took the name of Chāo Supātphā and also the Hindu name Gadādhar Sinha."[12]

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[8] Maheswar Neog, 'The Vaiṣṇava Renaissance in Assam', *Aspects of the Heritage of Assam* (Indian History Congress Souvenir, Gauhati, 1960, p. 36.

[9] *ibid.*, p. 37.

[10] S. Sarma. 'The Sattra Institution of Assam', *ibid.*, p. 53.

[11] *ibid.*, p. 55.

"The victory of the Assamese over the Mughals proclaimed the ultimate triumph of nationalism and patriotism over imperialism and alien rule. The Assamese emerged from the struggle with great self-confidence, prestige and ambition, and this made possible the vast preparation for an aggressive war (against the Mughals) in the reign of Rudra Singha, the famous son and successor of Gadādhar Singha, which were only rendered futile by his sudden death."[13]

This renewed self-confidence coupled with a spirit of self-assertion arising out of freedom from foreign aggressions and the resulting disruption of normal life of the country, prepared the Assamese for an era of great achievements. This was manifest in the grandeur and sophistication of court-life and an eagerness on the part of rulers to surpass their predecessors in building activities and in lavishing patronage upon the numerous scholars and artists that flocked the Āhom royal court. Painters in the Mughal style found in Gargāon, the Āhom capital, a second Delhi, for Gargāon had become the Delhi of the east and Rudrasiṁha and Śivasiṁha, its Akbar and Shajahan, and Queens phuleśvarī and Ambikā Devī, the Nurjahāns.

Rudrasiṁha is generally regarded as the greatest of Āhom monarchs for his profound spirit of toleration, his attempt to break the seclusion of Assam by creating a new order of people in society—the Bairāgīs and the Khouṇḍs, whose duty was to visit important centres of culture in India and import to Assam beneficient customs and manners. Rudrasiṁha's love of music and patronage of literature were no less remarkable. The reign period of Śivasiṁha (1714-44) the son and successor of Rudrasiṁha is far more important from the point of view of cultural development in Assam. But it had been really an era of the consorts of Śivasiṁha who were the real live force behind the renaissance of literature and painting under the Tungkhuṅgīyā dynasty.

To begin with, Ratnakanti, the first wife of Śivasiṁha was also a patron of literature and had the *Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa* translated into Assamee by the poet laureate, Kavirāja Cakravartī. The next queen, Phuléśvarī, a neo-convert to Śaktism along with her husband, was in favour of the Rājguru, and was thus raised to the position of the ruling queen and was given the title of Bar-Rajā[14] or the "great king." She even had coins struck in her name with the Persian legend "Ahom Bégum Parmatheśvarī Devī". She inspired great poetical works. Kavirāja Cakarvartī, the court-poet rendered into Assamese verse the story of Śakuntalā at the instance of the king and the queen. The same indomitable court-poet translated for the poetically minded royal spouse the *Śaṅkhacūḍa-vadha,* a chapter from the Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa, whose manuscript is still remarkable for its neat penmanship. An Assamese translation of the *Ānanda-laharī,* a work, in praise of the goddess Durgā was also illustrated. According to Dr S. K. Bhuyan, Śivasiṁha's interest in those works reflected his personal love affairs with Phuleśvarī. The *Gīta-govinda* was also translated by Kavirāja Cakravartī although Hemchandra Goswami assigns this illuminated work to the reign of Rudrasiṁha. She was succeded as the Bar-rajā by her cousin Draupadī who was already married to the governor of Śadiyā. The king remarried her and named her Ambikā Devī or Madāmbikā. She too was as great a patron of learning and advancement as her illustrious cousin Pramathésvarī. "The name of Queen Madāmbikā will go down to pesterity as the inspirer of a great Assamese treatise on Elephantology, with the title Hastīvidyārṇava."[15] It was compiled by Sukumār Barkāth in 1734 A.D. The paintings, which evince great accuracy of observation, form the principal attraction of the book. The paintings were executed by two artists working in the Mughal style. They were Dilbar, possibly a Muslim as the name seems to suggest, and Dosāi, a Hindu Assamese. Another important work of art of this time is the *Bhāgavata's* Book VI, painted by one Vadha Ligirā in A.D. 1736 by the orders of the king, queen and the prince of Ṭipām, the son of Śivasiṁha and Ambikā Devī.[16] The *Dharma-purāṇa,* was composed in metrical Assamese by Kavicandra Dvija and was also illustrated by Vadha Ligirā.[17] It is one of the finest examples of Assamese court painting and is at present in the British Museum.

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[12] S. N. Bhattacharya, *A History of Mughal Northeast Frontier Policy*, pp. 387-f.

[13] *ibid.*, pp. 387-f.

[14] S. K. Bhuyan, *An Assamese Nurjahan*, p.

Another royal house that was the patron of literature and painting, was that of Darrang, one of the eastern branches of the Koch kings of Kāmarūpa. They, like their related state of Beltalā, Rāṇī and Luki had been feudatories of the Āhom kings. The seat of the Darrang Rājās had been Mohanpur, near Mangaldai in the district of Darrang. The most important result of their contribution had been the *Vaṁśāvalī* of the Rājās of Darrang by Sūryakhari Daivajña in 1791 A.D. It is also illustrated but in a degenerate style of Gargāon. The paintings lack depth of composition and are not true to life. This book gives a full and vivid account of the Koch period in Assam. Its writer Surya Hari Ganak is reported to have been the greatest Sanskrit scholar of his time in Assam. The next kingdom where Assam painting flourished in the late 18th century and early 19th century is Koch Bihar.

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[15] *ibid.,* p. [16] See footnote 2 above.

[17] *Dharma-purāṇa,* MSS with the British Museum, London; and a photostat reproduction with the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati; colophon.

Tai-Ahom Painting in Assam

By

RAJATANANDA DAS GUPTA

The earliest extant examples of manuscript illustration in Assam are from the *Phung Chin* manuscript, dated 1473 A.D., in the Āhom language and script. The Āhom brought with them their manuscripts dealing both with religious and with secular matters.[1] It is a treatise on the Āhom conception of heavens and hells as modified by animism as well as Hīnayāna Buddhism. The style of painting which is individualistic will be termed, 'Tāi-Āhom' in connection with the language in which the work is written. The style of illustration is as different from the sattrīyā school of painting in Assam as is Āhom, a Tāi language, is different from Assamese, an Indo-Aryan tongue. One style is as much Assamese as the other for in Assam the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman peoples and cultures met to give birth to one composite Assamese way of life.

The *Phung Chin* and the *Suk-tāntā Kyempong* manuscripts represent the earliest phase of Assamese manuscript illustration. These are written on folios of tulāpāt or locally made paper, folded and stitched together.

The *Phung Chin*[2] gives a description of the sixteen heavens and an equal number of hells according to the Theravāda as well as Āhom conception. Of these the four, Newasinnyakkasaneya satananwa Akingchingtana, Wingyana-mingehetapan, and Akasamisgchasattanan, are the highest, whereto no female soul can be promoted ; they can only reside in the heaven called Akasanikttaka. Sikkiya, i.e., Śakara or Indra, lives in the heaven named Chalapehuthamma and rides on his five-headed elephant Ailavana, i.e., Airāvata. The Āhom conception of the transmigration of the soul has been described in this manuscript and each concept has been illustrated.

The illustrations, which are presently discussed, are manuscript miniatures in the real sense. But they can hardly be called painting as such. They are fine drawings outlined in black. Some of them are filled in with colours, restricted to black, brown, red, green, blue and yellow. They are not universally used, but only for particular portions of the illustrations. Gold paint or khām also been used far more sparingly ; the only occasions are to indicate the heart of the Buddha in the mahāparinirvāṇa scene (Fig. I) and to show Bodh Gayā in a sort of conventional Maṇḍala showing the Buddhist holy places, the centre of which is occupied by the former.

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[1] S. K. Bhuyan, 'The Administrative System of the Āhoms', *Aspects of the Heritage of Assam*, Indian History Congress, 22nd Session, Gauhati, 1959, p. 94.

[2] Manuscript No. 25, D.H.A.S., Gauhati.

The name of the scribe, who evidently was the illustrator too, is given as Chāo Kyāng Shen, belonging to Kingson Maolung, a principality between the Shān states and southern provinces of China. The date of the manuscript is given in Tāi Lākni or Tāi era, which when converted to the Christian calender comes to 1478 A.D. This date, given in the manuscript itself, has given rise to some controversies. Dr Moti Chandra does not accept it, and thinks that the manuscript is decidely of a much later date, though he does not assign it to any particular century. Miss Ingrid Aal of Norway, an authority on south-east Asian painting places the illustrations to a period as late as 1650 A.D. She, however, says that only some of the illustrations of the manuscript can be assigned to that period, while the rest are to be considered much later in date on stylistic ground. Of those that have been assigned to c. 1650 A.D. are the illustrations of the Pillar of Dharma (Fig. II) and that of Parinirvāṇa (Fig. I).

The contentions of the scholars are, however, not acceptable. Firstly, they have not been able to give any specific reasons in favour of their views. Before contradicting their views, general traits of the style can be discussed.

The subjects are directly placed on the blank surface of the folio. No landscape serves as background. The majority of the illustrations are of human or of semidivine beings all depicted in anthropomorphic forms. The human figures are all in front view though the faces are drawn in the three-quarter profile. The depiction is similar as in the frescoes of Ānanda Monastery of Pagan.[3]

These frescoes from the Upāli Thein ordination hall and a monastery near the Ānanda temple belong to the 17th century. But they definitely contain in them elements from a much earlier school. But this school though different from the Mon frescoes from Kyanzitthas (temple like the Nagayon, 11th century) and are decidely the result of Shān domination of Burma, for paintings in a similar style are produced by the Shān people of Upper Burma for ritualistic purposes as well as for decorating processional cars. Pyres for the cremation of Phongyis or Bhikkhus are embellished with similar paintings by the people of Akyab.[4]

After a comparative study of the Pagan frescoes (c. 11th century) and the later Shān influenced style of Burma we can say that the *Phung Chin* and the *Suktāntā-Kyempong* are examples of Shān colonial art on Indian soil. For, the Āhoms entered Assam almost at the same time when the Shāns took over the domination of Pagan after its fall at the hands of the Tartars of Kublāi Khān in 1287 A.D. In both the countries the Shāns began a new dynasty and introduced a new culture, though very soon they were submerged by the superior cultures of the conquered countries.

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[3] Thaw Ka, *The Early Art of Burma*, perspective of Burma, p. 35.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 38, pl. 16.

But the Āhom paintings contain in them some traits of the pre-Shān Pagan style of Nagayon. They had possibly infiltrated into the Āhom circle after Shān painting had itself absorbed Pagan elements in Burma and then transmitted them to the sister kingdom of Mung-dun-chun-khām, or Assam, under the Āhoms. Intercourse between Upper Assam and Upper Burma had always remained, although the intensity varied from time to time. The chief ambassadors of this cultural exchange had been Buddhist monks, who were often appointed abbots in the bāpucāṅgs or vihāras of the Tāi-phāke people in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts of Assam. The following characteristics of pre-Shān Pagan painting are also presented in those of the *Phung Chin* manuscript : "Contours and flat fabrics are defined by heavy black lines ; figures are stylised and majestic. Those representing persons of greater importance are large in proportion to the others, ... There is no linear nor atmospheric perspective, no modelling in light and shade . . . . faces are impressive symbols rather than actual portraits."[5] All these apply to Āhom paintings also. They are all puppet-like and are gracefully posed. Their heads are generally tilted to a side and the expressions are serene and sombre. The dancing scene from the heaven of Sikiya (Fig. III) is full of animation, while the Buddha's parinirvāṇa scene shows how successful the simple style had been in expressing the sorrow of the disciples (Fig. I) with the greatest economy.

The lines are generally of uniform thickness and flowing. The curves of the elbows are smooth and not angular and sharp as in the early western Indian and Pagan paintings. The fingers are exceptionally long and tapering, full of expression and though they do not form any mudrās as such they are equally successful in their mission. One thing that is common to all these illustrations is that they are so throughly imbibed with the spirit of the text. The men and women are full of humility and devotion as expressed in their poses and have serene and compassionate looks in their eyes. They successfully represent the teachings of the Buddha for the laity.

The two of Buddha figures in the bhūmisparśamudrā are important since they betray their mixed origin (pl. IV). They are all similar and are arranged in a row, each under a cinque-foil cusped arch. Such a representation evidently suggests that they represent icons from some place of Buddhist worship, just as most of the Pāla paintings of Buddhist deities did. Moreover, their being placed each under an arch is, according to Basil Gray, another Pāla element.[6]

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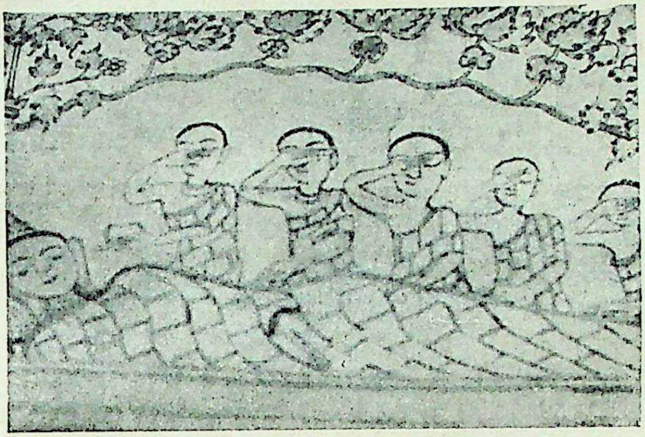
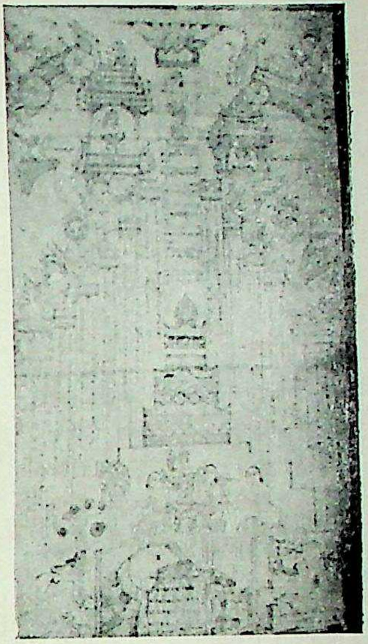
[5] *ibid.*, p. 44.

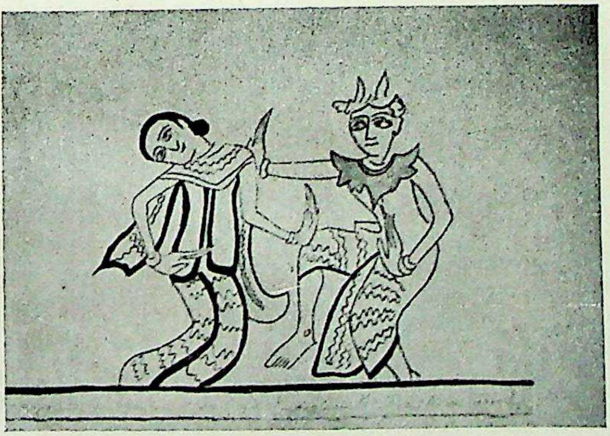
[6] Basil Gray 'The Development of Painting in India in the 16th century :' *Marg*, Vol. VI, No. 3 1953 p. 20.



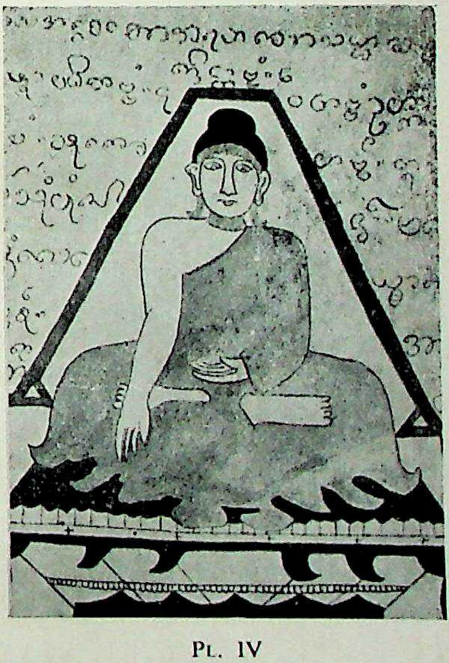
Pl. I



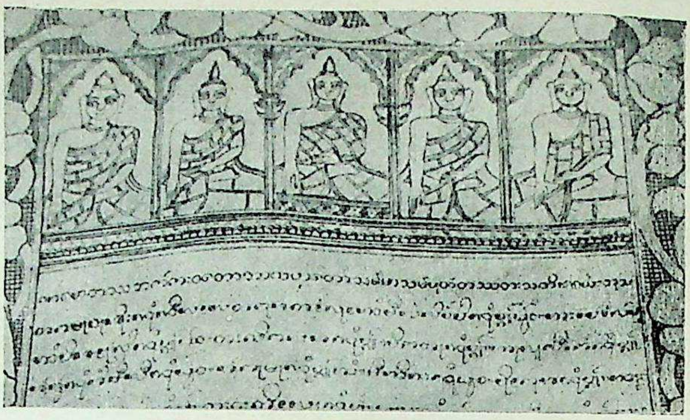
Pl. II



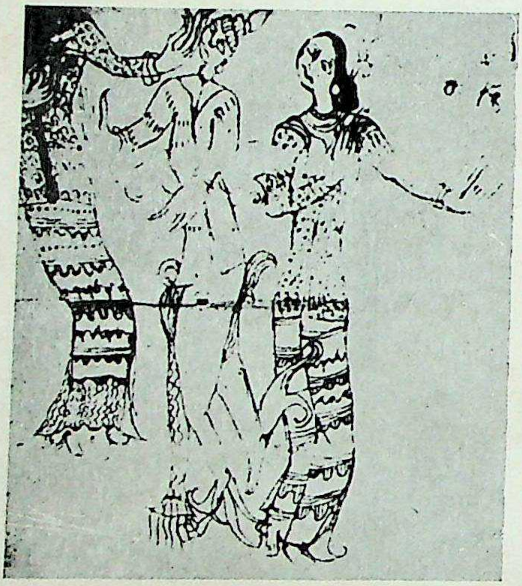
Pl. III



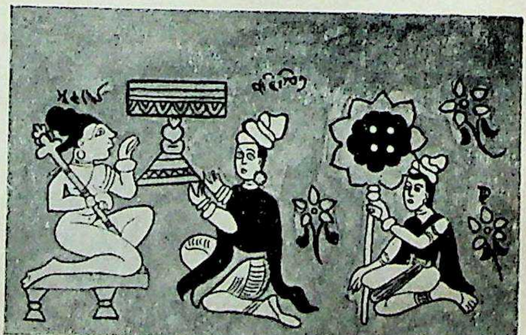
Pl. IV



Pl. V



Pl. VI



Pl. VII

Another manuscript in the same style, the *suktāntā-Kyempong*[7] comes from Nāmphākiāl in the Lakhimpur district. It is a treatise on Lokadharma of Theravāda Buddhism. The language is Tāi-Phāke and the script Āhom. The writer is one Prince Nojā of Kingwi, a Shān principality and he is also a cousin of Chāo Kyāng Shān, the scribe of the *Phung Chin* manuscript. The present copy of the *Suktāntā-Kyempong* was made by one Āichu of the Nāmphākiāl vihāra, during the abbotship of U Kandama. The date of the present copy is, however, not known. The original copy, as tradition says, was done about fifty years later than that of the *Phung Chin* and hence can be placed about 1523 A.D. But since the original one is contemporaneous with the *Phung Chin* manuscript, the present copy preserves in its two illustrations the traits of 15th century paintings.

The Buddha is an illustrated prototype of an icon in a nichè as in a Pāla painting. The nichè is rather unusual, in the shape of a truncated pyramid (pl. V). It has a cold and static expression like the Buddha images from Burma. Like the *Phung Chin* illustrations it is also a painted drawing. Colours used include blue, yellow, red, brown, black and gold.

According to Basil Gray, "They clearly look to the Buddhist manuscripts of the Pāla period, which are organised in the same way with figures in architectural niches."[8] The other sides of the influence is equally apparent. They are all in bhūmisparśamudrā and the sanghāti leaves the right shoulder bare. The uṣṇīṣa is tapering and the ears elongated and almost elephantine,—all being attributes of a Mahāpuruṣa. These elements betray their affinity to Siamese Buddha images, from Wat Mahādhātu, Lopburi Thailand.[9]

The illustrations of the Pillar of Dharma (pl. II) and the parinirvāṇa (pl. I) have been described as naive and have been placed aground 1650 A.D. by Miss Ingrid Aal. One thing that can be said in connection with these illustrations is that being examples of religious art they are conservative and hence have remained unchanged for centuries. They show in the later dates the characteristics of the days of their origin among the Tāi people in their original homeland.

The Shān style of painting is being continued still by the Buddhist population of the Lohit Frontier Division of the N.E.F.A. The Khāmpti Buddhist priests or bāpus in the bāpucāṅgs are adept in this art. A number of paintings depicting the punishments in hell and Sujāta's offering of milk to the Buddha from the bāpucāṅg of Nigru near Nāmsāi are in the collection of late Dr Verrier Elwin of Shillong. Dr Elwin suggested to me the title "Hīnayāna Buddhist painting" for these. But when we take into account those from Āhom manuscripts it is more reasonable to call them Tāi-Āhom. Stylistically, and in technique, they are identical with the paintings in the Āhom manuscripts from Nāmphākiāl. Over and above style, in respect to composition, architectural details, and costume types, also similarities are apparent. The importance of this school is that it represents the only surviving school of the Assamese people, and maintains the continuity of a pictorial style for six centuries. Manuscripts were also produced in this style mainly in the Lohit Frontier Division (pl. VI).

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[7] Manuscript No. 1197, D.H.A.S., Gauhati.

[8] Basil Gray, *ibid*.

[9] Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India : Buddhist Hindu and Jaina*, pl. 166.

Though the style of manuscript miniatures of the Tāi-Āhoms had usually been line drawings, occasionally filled in with paints, a painted version has also been found. It is a *Bhāgavata,* Book III, on sācipāt, dated 1782 A.D., and belongs to the Kāmarūpa Anusandhāna Samiti, Gauhati. It contains all the traits of Tāi-Āhom painting except that the figures are painted and the costume type is more Indianised, being the dhoti, uttarīya, pāg, and the taṅgāli round the waist. But being a late copy it had absorbed some characteristics of the later Darrang school, specially in the treatment of animals.

The original Tāi-Āhom characteristics are preserved in the blank background and spacing of figures is in an unconnected manner, though they ultimately succeed in making the whole picture. The faces are in three-quarter profile though in a few cases as that of Śukadeva (pl. VII) and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma profiles with impersonal faces as in Darrang paintings are to be met with. The fingers are again tapering and the kaḍās at the wrists are in the Tāi fashion. The treatment of the feet as well as the faces with staring large eyes is also in the same tradition. Assamese traits are noticed in the Cālpīrā or low stool, the Śarāi or a tray on a stand and the ārowān or the royal sun-shade held by a ligirā or page.

Nature is not given much importance in a painting intended to eulogise Lord Kṛṣṇa. Vegetation is at its minimum, and only traces are a few large flower bearing plants or meandering foliage against the monochrome red background.

The treatment of the serpent, Kāliya, being quelled by Kṛṣṇa is also interesting. There is so much of a dragon in its wreathing body and scaly skin. It is different from the fish holding the Earth in the *Phung Chin.* The eyes, however, in Tāi paintings are not beady but staring and angry and the jaws are prominent, as in this *Bhāgavata,* III (1782 A.D) MS from the Assam State Museum, Gauhati.

Intimate connections remained among the Buddhist of Upper Assam and Upper Burma. It introduced, along with Burmese monks deputed to vihāras of Assam, the Burmese style of manuscript writing and illustrations. Burmese kambawas, or palm-leaf manuscripts, were also copied. The technique of gilding the letters and of laquering the folios and embellishing them with gold letters were also taught to the bāpus and the novices. The vihāra at Barpathār in the Sibsagar district has a beautiful kambawa made during the abbotship of U Kandamma in the 19th century.

Objections might be made to include the Tāi-Āhom illustrations among paintings, for they are primarily only line drawings. Firstly, they have been included in this category, they serve the same purpose as pure painting in as far as they are book illustrations. Secondly, Indian, and Oriental art as such makes not much distinction between the two modes of illustration. William Balke says, "The distinction that is made in modern times between a painting and a drawing proceeds from the ignorance of art. The merit of a picture is the same as the merit of a drawing. The dauber daubs his drawings ; he who draws his drawings, draws his picture." The same fundamentals of Oriental art are expressed by Coomaraswamy when he says that the "identity of draughtsmanship and painting is characteristic of the greater part of Oriental art."[10] The lines of the Tāi-Āhom painting thus remain purely calligraphic. What he says about the lines in the frescoes of Ajantā and Sigiriyā can also apply to Tāi-Āhom line drawings. "The long flowing line and the sense of rhythmic movements are noteworthy. There is a freedom of drawings and grace of line." An element of sensuous delight prevails the ekaśaraṇa nāmadharma, propounded by Śaṅkaradeva, which was one of the many schools of neo-Vaiṣṇavism, that originated in mediæval India.

Information regarding the technique of painting the manuscripts and book covers and also about the carriers and implements are no less ample. But most of them are gathered from floating tradition and by a study of the technique followed by present day miniaturist. The most common carrier for manuscripts in Assam was made from the bark of the Agar tree (Acquilaria Agallocha) and is known as sācipāt.

Another material on which writings and paintings were done is tulāpāt, which had ginned cotton as its ingredient[11] Tulāpāt, as the name implies, is a sheet made from cotton by felting it. Tulāpāt leaves were made by pressing cotton. This practice of making paper out of felted cotton is a direct inheritence of Assam from pre-Christian times.

The use of tulāpāt was as wide as that of Sācipāt not only for writing but also for miniature painting. The oldest painted manuscript on tulāpāt are the *Phung Chin* (1473 A.D.) and the *Śuktāntā-Kyempong.* Although Dr Maheswar Neog in his *The Art of Painting in Assam* calls tulāpāt, felted cotton, a description of its manufacture, which follows, shows that tulāpāt was not made from cotton at all. It is not yet known if at some centres paper was made from cotton, ginned and felted. The finished tulāpāt looks and feels more like fine lint than like paper as we understand it today. During the Āhom rule, Assam's foreign trade was strictly controlled by the State, and paper does not seem to have been imported from Mughal, and later on British, India. The two important sources on Assamese trade with India, viz., Hamiltons *An Account of Assam* (1807-14) and Dr S. K. Bhuyan's *Early British Relations with Assam*, nowhere refer to any kind of paper being imported into during the Tuṅkhuṅgīyā period when manuscript painting reached its zenith. The process of making tulāpāt was indigenous to Assam and possibly was a contribution of the various Tāi or Shān peoples, who entered Assam beginning with the Āhoms in the 13th century till the Khāmptis in the 18th century.

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[10] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Indian Drawings.*

[11] Maheswar Neog, *The Art of Painting in Assam*, p. 4.

This process of making tulāpāt has been gathered from Śrī Chāikhong-let Gohāin, an Āhom pundit of the Nāmphakiāl village. Tulāpāt is essentially a paper made from wood pulp. Three kinds of trees were usually selected for the purpose. White tulāpāt was made from the maihai tree, the dark brown variety from the Yāmon and the red variety from a tree the name of which has not been found. The Yāmon tree has been identified with the hsa[12] of the Shān people and nuni or paper mulberry in Assamese (Bronsanettia Papyrifera). "The barks of the above-mentioned trees were cut up in convenient sizes and then beaten thoroughly. This broke the fibres and separated and loosened them. Then these were boiled till they melted and formed into a fine pulp and became cleared of all impurities. The pulp was next poured over water kept in rectangular ditches of required sizes and it floated on the water's surface. It was then evenly spread all over evenly with a scraper to the shape of the watery surface. Then it was left to cool. When cool, the film of pulp lying on the surface of the coller gave a sheet of strong and tough paper. Usually, a tulāpāt folio was made by stitching two single sheets together or by folding a longer sheet in two and then stitching the same. This was done to give strength to the folios. The technique described above is identical to the one described in *The Shans at Home* which shows that this technique was of extra-Indian origin. Important centres of making tulāpāt were located at Nāmphākiāl, Munglong and Nārāyaṇpur in the district of Lakhimpur in Assam. The people who made it were mostly Āhoms and other peoples of Shān extraction. The Monpā Buddhists of the Kameng Frontier Division of the N.E.F.A. also make paper in a similar way from the bark of the "paper-tree" locally known as Sukso.[13]

Palm-leaves or tālpāt though common in Burma and Bengal were rarely used in Assam for the tāla tree does not grow in Assam. But palm-leaves manuscripts were produced, painted and laquered in the Vihāra of Disāngpāni in the Sibsagar district. That is an area populated by the descendants of the Narās, another Shān tribe related to the Āhoms by marriage and blood. They are all Theravāda Buddhists and the abbot of the said vihāra was one venerable U Kandamma, a Burmese. The palm leaves were produced mostly during his days in the last century and were copies from heavily laquered kambawa of Burma. They are also gilded and are real works of calligraphy and penmanship. The bamboo strip folios as well as the palm-leaves were produced mainly by the Buddhist of Upper Assam, who belong to the Āhom, Khāmpti, Tāi-Phāke or Phākiāl, Norā, Āitoniā, Turung and Khāmjaṅgīyā.[14] Manuscripts and scrolls on silk (pāṭ and mugā) cloth were stitched along the top to form a pad. A non-Hindu, Āhom manuscript of mugā silk with beautiful illustrations is deposited at the Buddhist shrine of Khārgharīyā Ḍabā, sixteen miles from Sibsagar.

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[12] Mrs. Milne, *Shans at Home*, pp. 175-76.

[13] Verrier Elwin, *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India*, p. 70;

Gold paint was also used but mainly for the more important manuscript illustration and royal letter papers were often decorated with gold-painted-latā or meanders. The Buddhists of Assam used gold paint to illustrate. Theravāda manuscripts the oldest specimen of which, Phung-Chin is dated 1473 A.D. To the Buddhists who are mostly of Tāi extraction gold as well as gold paint is known as khām where the Assamese called the art of gilding Soṇarpānī Carowā.[15] Gold was applied both as a paint and as a leaf.

The gold required for the khām was usually collected from the sands of the Subanśiri, the Burhidihiṅg and the rivers of upper Assam. A class of people known as the Soṇowāls were employed in the task of gold-washing. The gold in dust form facilitated and quickened the process of making khām. A piece of paper was smeared with yāng or the vegetable gum obtained from the yāng-pow or Bhoṭ-erā tree. Then it was placed atop a quantity of gold-dust spread on an even and smooth surface as a result the dust clung to the paper. Then it was left to dry and later cut into convenient sizes. The reverse process was followed to apply khām to a selected surface. The surface was smeared with the right quantity of glue made from buffalow hide and the gold leaf was applied to it. The gold now clung to the gummed surface and the paper was left blank. Gold dust was also used when it was mixed with some size or binding material. This process of gold leaf transfers is similar to one of the Moghul ways and has been mentioned in the *Śilparatna* (16th century). Though the *Visṇudharmottara* mentions gold-leaf but the process of transfer was not followed according to it. Dr Moti Chandra is of the opinion that gold-painting came to Western Indian painting from Central.[16] Nāmphākiāl in upper Assam was a centre of khām making. Silver paint was rarely used.

The palette of the Tāi artists was very limited,—to blue, red, black and gold. They used a thick size for their colours which gave their manuscript a laquered look. The *Suk-tāntā-Kyempong* manuscript contemporary of the *Phung Chin* manuscript is a good example of the use of the thick size. It was made from buffalow hide and in this way is related to the Vajralepa mentioned in the *Visṇudharmottara.* A quantity of hides was burnt and the ash reduced to a fine powder. To it was added the necessary blue or red colours extracted from the different kind of berries. Sometimes this size was also used to apply khām instead of using the yāng gum. The hide-paste when further diluted served as ink. To it was sometimes added fish's bile to make it perfect. The above techniques have been collected from Śri Chāikhong-let Gohāin of Nāmphākial.

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[14] Lila Gogoi, 'Āhom Lipir Puthi', Purbākāś, July, 1960, pp. 119-f.

[15] Harakanta Barua Sadar-amin, *Assam Buranji*, p. 123.

[16] Moti Chandra, *Western Indian Miniature*, p. 88.

The Kamarupa School of Dharmasastra with Particular Notice of Pitambara Siddhantavagisa

By

MANORANJAN SASTRI

The religious, social and domestic life of the Hindus in different parts of India have always been regulated by the rules of different schools of Dharamaśāstra, codified in course of time in various Smṛtinibandhas (digest on Dharmaśāstras) of different regions. After the British had taken over the administration of this country, attempts were made to follow the rules of Indian Dharmaśāstras at least in civil administration. As a result of such attempts Colebrooke's Digest of Hindu Law was compiled, which exercised great influence on the five High Courts of British India in Bombay, Madras, Allahabad, Patna and Calcutta in those early days. At present too the civil suits relating to Hindu Society are tried in Indian law courts according to Hindu law which is divided into five schools such as (1) the Bombay school, (2) the Madras school, (3) the Banaras school, (4) the Mithila school and (5) the Bengal school.

The *Mitākṣarā,* a famous commentary on the *Yājñavalkya*-saṃhitā composed by Vijñāneśvara between 1070-1100 A.D.[1] was the fountain head, from which flowed fresh streams of exegesis and developments, forming the four aforesaid separate schools other than the Bengal school, which is mainly based on the theory of the *Dāyabhāga,* a digest on inheritence and partition, compiled by Jīmūtavāhana between A.D. 1090-1130.[1] Under the decision of the courts in British India, the *Mitākṣarā is* of paramount authority in several matters of Hindu law such as marriage, adoption, inheritence, partition, and recovery of debts throughout India except in Bengal and Assam where the *Dāyabhāga prevails* Though Kāmarūpa or modern Assam is at present governed by the Bengal school of Dharamaśāstra, the existence of a separate school of Dharmaśāstra in ancient Kāmarūpa could not be denied or ignored at all. It is true, that later on Nibandhakāras (digest writers) of Bengal and Kāmarūpa, mainly followed the Dāyabhāga theory in the sphere of inheritance and partition, but there are many differences between their opinions which distinguish one school from the other. This is somewhat similar to the differences of opinions that exist among the followers of the Mitākṣarā, which led to form different schools in western India. We are pointing out here only one instance of such differences :

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[1] These dates are taken from P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmashastra,* vol. I.

Regarding the strīdhana there is a conflict of authority between the followers of Dāyabhāga in Bengal, on the one hand, and that of Kāmarūpa on the other. In case of a woman who dies without an issue, in the opinion of Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya and Shrikrishna Tarkālaṅkāra of Bengal, in absence of her stepson, stepson's son, and stepson's grand sons, ayautaka-dhana (All technical strīdhana other than Śulka, Yautaka and Anvādheya) would pass, in order, to her husband, mother, brother and father. But Pītāmbara Siiddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya the most prominent digest-writer of Assam is of the opinion that such property of childless woman (agraja-strīdhara) will devolve to her husband, brother, mother and father respectively. In support of their opinion, Bengal nibandhakāras read dictum of the sage Devala, quoted by Jīmūtavāhana in Dāyabhāga अप्रजायां हरेद् भर्त्ता माता भ्राता पिताऽपिवा । And the Kāmarūpī nibandhakāra on the other hand reads the same dictum of Devala as : अप्राजायां हरेद्भर्त्ता भ्राता माता पिताऽपिवा । Both the parties equally claimed that the reading accepted by them is really the correct version as quoted by Jīmūtavāhana.

Besides this, in the context of prescribing devolution of strīdhana Siddhāntavāgīśa prescribes that at the time of partition of strīdhana among the unmarried daughters and sons or among the unmarried daughters only (in the case of yautaka-dhana), some things from their mother's property should be given to her married daughters as honorarium and also to her daughter's daughters (dauhitrī) as gift. In support of his view he quoted the dicta of Bṛhaspati and Manu respectively :

(a) स्त्री धनं तद्पत्यानां दुहिता च तदंशिनी ।
असत्ता चेत् समूढा तु लभते मानमात्रकम् ॥

(b) यास्तासां स्युर्दुहितरस्तासामपि यथार्हतः ।
मातामह्या धनात् किंचित् प्रदेयं प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ॥

Explaining the former verse the learned author informs also that in Dāyabhāga it is read as 'na labhenmatṛkaṁ dhanam' in place of 'labhate māna-mātrakam.'[3] This opinion definitely differs from that of Dāyabhāga and other digest writers of Bengal.

Our original law-givers clearly announce that the principal sources of Dharma are the Vedas, the Smṛtis and customs. In case of conflict among these three, each of the preceding one has more force or validity than the

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[2] Vide *Dāyatattva*, p. 185 (Jivananda Vidyasagar edition) and *Vivāda-kaumudī*, (Kāmarūpa Saṁskṛta Sañjivanī Sabhā MS. 100, p. 50*a*.)

[3] लभतेमानमात्रकमित्यत्र नलभेन्मातृकं धनमिति दायभागे पाठः । —*Vivāda-kaumudī*, p. 50*a*.

succeeding ones. Accordingly, later digest-writers on Dharmaśāstra belonging to different parts of India had to give more attention to regional usages too, which were traditionally recognised and prevailed in their own localities. Sometimes in support of such usages they had also to explain away the passages of original Dharmaśāstras to adjust and harmonise the varying practices of the people with dicta of ancient sages.

There were some peculiar customs prevailing in Assam which were traditionally recognised by the people. In support of such practices Kāmarūpīya nibandhakāras had to find out and quote verses from ancient scriptures as well as to abandon some dicta which had been considered to be against the prevailing customs. In the following pages I intend to give only a few instances of religious practices which were traditionally observed throughout ancient Kāmarūpīya nibandhakāras on a sound sastric basis. These were either silently avoided or elaborately refuted by other nibandhakāras. I am also intending here to give a few brief information of such 'Smṛtinibandhas' which formed the Kāmarūpa school of Dharamaśastra.

1. *bhūmidāha* or *śāṭha* : The day of Āṣāḍha saṃkrānti with its preceding three days and following three days (7 days in the total) are called bhūmidāha (burning of the earth) or śāṭha. During this time all religious performances excepting nitya-karma (compulsory daily rites) and naimittika karma (occasional compulsory rites) as well as ploughing of soils and sowing of seeds are prohibited. This prohibition was strictly observed throughout Assam including the Rangpur District of the modern East Pakistan and the Kochbehar and Jalpaiguri Districts of West Bengal. In support of this tradition Kāmarūpīya digest writers quoted some ancient passages which are not available anywhere in the works compiled outside Kāmarūpa.

In the *Smṛtisāgarasāra* by Mahāmahopādhyāya Rājaguru Dāmodaramiśra, a prominent Kāmarūpa digest-writer, who flourished between 1400 and 1450 A.D.[4] We find the following verses in support of the authenticity of this practice : "During the time of bhūmidāha seeds should not be sown on the soil. Except complusory daily rites all religious rites such as yajña, dāna (gift) and vratas should not be performed. Three days at the end of the month in which the sun goes on rising with vṛṣarāśi (Taurus) and three days in the beginning of the month in which the sun goes on rising with mithuna rāśi (Gemini) along with the day lying between these two groups in which mithuna saṃkrānti occurs—these 7 days in the total or at least three intermediate days of those are called bhūmidāha. Neither svādhyāya (recitation of the vedas) nor vaṣaṭkāra (homa and worship of gods), nor devatarpaṇa and pitṛtarpaṇa (offering libation to gods and the manes) should be performed; similarly the ploughing of fields and the sowing of seeds too are forbidden during the time of the burning and menstruation of the earth".[5] These verses are noticed with slight variation in the *Svalpamatsya-purāṇa*, a work of Dharamaśāstra nature, which was probably compiled in ancient Kāmarūpa earlier than 11th century A.D.[6] Mahāmahopādhyāya Śambhunātha Miśra of the first quarter of 18th century A.D. supporetd this tradition, quoting the verses from the *Smṛtisāgara*. It is probable that Dāmodara Miśra quoted these verses from the *Svalpamatsya-purāṇa* in his works and the later Nibandhakāras took them from the *Smṛtisāgara*. Ripuñjaya Bhaṭṭācārya, the author of the *Pūrṇacandra*, written between 1610 and 1660 A.D., goes further to explain the word Śāṭha by quoting passages from ancient lore.[7] The *Svalpamatsya-purāṇa*' and *Smṛtisāgara* were not unknown to Bengal nibandhakāras because Dhanañjaya, Halāyudha and Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa quoted some verses from the former, while Śūlapāṇi and Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya quoted from the latter. But there is no instance in their work to show that they had treated this particular topic, not to speak of quoting any dictum to support. Therefore, bhūmidāha or śāṭha may be assumed as the special matter dealt with in the smṛtinibandhas belonging to Kāmarūpa school.

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[4] Sastri, 'Mahāmahopādhyāya Rājaguru Dāmodara Miśra', *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, 1954 and 1956.

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[5] *Smṛtisāgarasāra*, p. 29 :

भूमिदाहे नकर्त्तव्यं वीजानां वपनं भुवि ।
नित्यादृते नकुर्व्वीत यज्ञदानव्रतानि च ॥
पूर्व्वैत्रीणि परेत्रीणि संक्रान्तिर्मध्यवर्त्तिनी ।
मिथुनादौ वृषस्यान्ते भूमिदाहो दिनत्रयम् ॥
न स्वाध्यायवषट्कारौ न देवपितृतर्पणम् ।
हलानां वाहनं चैव वीजानां वपनं तथा ॥

यत्रदग्धा भवेत् पृथ्वी यत्र वा स्याद्रजस्वला ॥

[6] Sastrī, 'The Svalpa-matsya-purāṇa,' *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute*, Allahabad, vol. IX, parts 2-4, November 1953.

[7] *Pūrṇacandra*, khaṇḍa II, MS. 112*b*, K.S.S. Sabhā, p. 47*b* :

तदुक्तं :—राहुणा ग्रसितः पूर्व्वं त इमे सप्तवासराः ।
ब्रह्मशापभयाच्चैव तेनैवोत्तारिताः पुनः ॥
चाण्डालमुखसंस्पृष्टा वृषयुग्मसमुद्भवाः ।
ब्रह्मणो वचनात् सर्व्वे अपूज्या सर्व्वकर्म्मसु ॥

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शठो धूर्त्तः शठो राहुः शठो द्यूतं शठो रिपुः ।
शठेन राहुणा ग्रस्ताः शाठास्ते परिकीर्त्तिताः ॥

2. *ambuvācī* : The second peculiar rule codified by the Kāmarūpīya school of Dharmaśāstra is the prohibition of even daily and occasional compulsory rites during the time of menstruation of the earth, that is called ambuvācī. Dāmodara-miśra, Ripuñjjaya Bhaṭṭācārya and Śambhunātha-miśra, quoting ancient verses, ruled ont performance of all nitya, naimittika and kāmya rites except annual śrādha and ekādaśī-vrata during the time of ambuvācī.[8] We do not find any smṛtinibandhakāra belonging other than to Kāmarūpa holding such a view of the terrible impurity of ambuvācī.

3. *The time when ploughing is prohibited*: In the opinion of the kāmarūupīya smṛtinibandhakāras ploughing is prohibited during the occasions of the day of saṃkrānti, ekādaśi, yugādya (beginning of the ages) amāvasyā, pūrṇimā and the day on which same significant vratas, śrāddhas and yajñas are to be performed. The above-mentioned authors of smṛtinibandhas elaborately prescribe this rule by quoting earlier authorities.[9]

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[8] *Smṛtisāgarasāra,* ed. under the name, *Bṛhadgaṅgājala,* Dvitīya-khaṇḍa, by Ramanath Goswami, p. 33.

"नित्यं नैमित्तिकं काम्यं जपयज्ञादिकं च यत् ।
ऋतुमत्यां न कुर्व्वीत पूर्व्वसंकल्पिताहते ॥
न कुर्यात् खननं भूमेश्चतुरङ्गुलिकाहते ।
वीजानां वपनं चात्र पूर्व्वकृष्टेऽपि वर्ज्जयेत् ॥"

* * *

"ऋतुमत्यामशौचिवत् सन्ध्यादिकमपि नास्तीति तात्पर्यम् ।"

Varṇaratnākara, MS. 221, K.S.S. Sabhā, p. 38*a*.

सारसंग्रहे—

नस्वाध्यायवषट्कारौ न देवपितृतर्पणम् ।
वर्जयेत् सर्व्वकर्म्माणि श्राद्धमेकादशीं विना ॥
प्रत्यब्दविहितं श्राद्धं प्रेतश्राद्धं दशाहिकम् ।
अम्बुवाच्यां तु कुर्व्वीत तथवैकादशीव्रतम् ॥"

[9] श्राद्धे चैव महायज्ञे संक्रान्त्यां हरिवासरे ।
युगादौ पक्षयोरन्ते न कुर्याद्धलवाहनम् ॥
दशाहादुपरिश्राद्धे गवादीन् नैव वाहयेत् ।
वाहने तु महान् दोषः पितृभिः सह मज्जति ॥

But the digest-writers of other parts of India, except a few of the later nibandhkāras of Bengal who probably accepted this prescription from Kāmarūpīya digest-writers are not found paying so much atention to this matter.

4. *Cāndravāda* : All Nibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa except Nīlāmbarācārya of 13th century are the supporters of sauravāda (the theory of solar month). They elaborately established that the direct meaning (mukhyārtha) of the word māsa, applied without adjective is solar month while the other sorts of month may be taken as indirectly denoted by this word (māsa). Jīmūtavāhana the earliest and most prominent smṛtinibandhakāra of Bengal also supported this theory which definitely shows that during his time the solar month traditionally prevailed in Bengal as well as in Assam. Among the earlier smṛtinibandhakāras of Bengal and Kāmarūpa Nīlāmbarācārya (13th cent.) was the first to have introduced the cāndravāda or the theory in which lunar month is assumed to be the direct meaning (śakyārtha) of the word māsa. His view was not welcomed by people and the later nibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa. But in Bengal some prominent smṛtinibandhakāras like Śulapāṇi and Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya accepted Nīlāmbara's view and established it on a stronger basis by raising more vigorous arguments against the theory of Jīmūtavāhana and others. Thus the theory of earlier nibandhakāras was overshadowed by the new theory of latter nibandhakāras and the souravāda was replaced later by cāndravāda in Bengal.

दाशाहिकेषु पिण्डेषु गवां वाहो न दूषणम् ।
अशौचात् परतः श्राद्धे हलवाहं परित्यजेत् ॥
नित्यश्राद्धेषु सर्व्वेषु श्राद्धेष्वम्बुघटेषु च ।
श्राद्धे चैवातिथिप्राप्तौ गवां वाहो न दूषणम् ॥
न वाह्या वृषभा राजन्नेकादश्यां दिनोदये ।
शान्तिकर्म्मणि पुण्याहे रुद्रभक्तैरनिन्दितैः ॥

* * *

महाव्रते महायज्ञे महाशब्दान्विते तिथौ ।
धृतिधर्म्मधनाकाङ्क्षी न कुर्याद् वृषवाहनम् ॥

—*Smṛtisāgarasāra*, pp. 31-f.

Ripuñjaya quoted various verses on this subject from different authorities. (See Pūrṇacandra 2nd part, MS. 1126 K.S.S. pp. 17B-19A)

Śambhunāth Miśra follows Dāmodara Miśra, quoting the same verses from Smṛtisāgara. (Vide *Varṇaratnākara*, MS. 221, K.S.S., 129 *a.*)

[10] Sastri, 'Nīlāmbarācārya', *The Indian Historical Quarterly.*

The earlier digest writers of Bengal, specially Jīmūtavāhana, Bhavadeva Bhatta and Halāyūdha exercised great influence over all Kāmarūpīya nibandhaKāras and the influence of Kāmarūpīya nibandhakāra's specially Nīlāmbarācārya and Dāmodara-miśra over later Bengal digest-writers cannot be denied at all. Jīmūtavāhana's arguments in support of sauravāda mostly encouraged Kāmarūpīya nibandhakāras to support their traditional view of solar month; and Nīlāmbarācārya's arguments, on the other hand, led the later nibandhakāras of Bengal to introduce their new theory, supporting the acceptability of cāndravāda (lunar cult) in that part of the eastern India.

Under this tradition in Kāmarūpa śrāddhas on the anniversary (pratisāmbatsarika śrāddha) are prescribed on the *tithi* of the solar month in which the death of the person concerned had taken place.[11]

This rule has been supported by the nibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa as well as by Jīmūtavāhana and Halāyūdha of Bengal.[12]

5. *Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī* : Another strange rule found in Kāmarūpīya system of Dharmaśāstra is that the śrīkṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamīvrata (the birth day ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa) is observed here, even now, during the saura bhādra (when the sun goes on rising with zodiacal sign Leo) while it is observed in lunar Śrāvaṇa in other parts of India. All the Kāmarūpīya nibandhakāras (except Nīlāmbarācārya and Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa) and the Vaiṣṇava saints of Assam prescribe this practice quoting some ancient dicta which are not mentioned by other nibandhakāras anywhere. According to the Kāmarūpīya system janmāṣṭami-vrata should be observed on the aṣṭamī tithi (8th lunar day) of the dark half attached to the Rohiṇī-nakṣatra, when the sun goes on rising with Siṃharāśi (Lee). The said vrata may be observed even in case such combination occurring during the malamāsa

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[11] *Śrāddhakaumudī*, ed. Taranath Goswami Smrititirtha, p. 16.

सांवत्सरिकश्राद्धं सौरेणैव कर्त्तव्यम् ;
यस्मिन्राशौस्थिते सूर्ये विपन्नो भवति द्विजः ।
तस्मिन्नेव तु कर्त्तव्या पिण्डदानोदकक्रिया ॥
इति धवलेश्वरलिखितप्रचेतोवाक्यात् ;
यस्मिन् राशौ गते भानौ विपत्तिं यान्ति मानवाः ।
तेषां तत्रैव कर्त्तव्या पिण्डदानोदकक्रिया ॥
इति कालविवेकादिलिखितसत्यव्रतव्याघ्रवचनाच्च ।

[12] *Kālaviveka*, p. 282.

सांवत्सरिकश्राद्धमस्मिन्देशे सौरव्यवहारानुरोधात् स्वकाल एव कर्त्तव्यम् ।

—*Samvatsara-pradīpa*, by Halāyudha MS, K.S.S. Sabha, p. 50*a*. It definitely indicates the prevalence of sauramāsa earlier in Bengal.

(intercalary month).[13] According to the digest-writers of ancient Kāmarūpa Rohiṇīyoga (annexation with Rohini-nakṣatra-) of aṣṭamī is preferable to others. Therefore, they called it by the name of rohinyaṣṭami. The same view is found to have been held by Jīmūtavāhana in the *Kāla-viveka* and Halāyūdha in the Samvatsara-pradīpa. [14] It leads us to presume that during ancient times (earlier than Śūlapāṇi and Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya) the practice of observing Śrīkṛṣṇajanmāṣṭamī preferably in saura Bhādra had a great vogue in Bengal also.

6. *Judicial code* : A complete code of judicial procedure, consisting of three works, namely,—*Vyavahāra-Kaumudī*, dealing with the judiciary in general, *Vlvāda-kaumudī*, dealing with topics of litigation or dispute, and *Daṇḍa-kaumudī*, dealing with punishments for crimes, all compiled by Mahāmahopādhyāya Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya between 1540 and 1610 A.D., is to be obtained. The learned author of these works has expressed, in places, his own opinions which are different from that of Bengal nibandhakāras.

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[13] चान्द्रे च श्रावणे सौरभाद्रे कृष्णाष्टमी बुधे ।
सोमेवा रोहिणीयुक्ता मध्यरात्रौ महाफला ॥

—*Smṛtisāgarasāra,* p. 43.

अतः कृष्णजन्माष्टमीव्रतं सौरेणैव कर्त्तव्यमिति स्थितम् ।

—*Varṣabhāskara,* MS. 221, p. 64

सिंहार्के रोहिणीयुक्ता नराः कृष्णाष्टमी यदि ।
रात्र्यर्द्धपूर्व्वपरगा जयन्तीकलयाऽपि च ॥

—*Śaraṇasaṁgraha,* M.S. K.S.S. Sabha p.98]

भाद्रमास्यसितेपक्षे वैष्णवं रोहिनीव्रतम् ।
मलमासेऽपि नोत्कर्षस्तत्र कुर्व्वीत कर्हिचित् ॥

—*Varṣabhāskara,* p. 63.

This verse has also been quoted by Vedācārya in Smṛtiratṇākara, by Shridhara Bhatta in 'Varṣapradīpa' and by Halāyudha in Samvatsarapradīpa.

[14] "तस्माद् यदार्द्धरात्रे सौरभाद्रेऽष्टमी कृष्णा
रोहिण्या संयुता तदेव वासुदेवस्य जन्मदिनम् ।"

—*Kālaviveka,* p. 499.

"सिंहराशिगते सूर्यें गगने जलदागमे ।
मासिभाद्रपदेऽष्टम्यां कृष्णपक्षेऽर्द्धरात्रके ।
शशाङ्क वृषराशिस्थे नक्षत्रे रोहिणीयुते ॥"

—*Samvatsarapradīpa,* p.

Both the authors have not even mentioned the view of observing rohiṇyaṣṭamī in cāndra Śrāvaṇa or in cāndra Bhādra.

Now we are proceeding to point out the works upon which Kāmarūpa school of Dharmaśāstra mainly rests.

Dr P. V. Kane divides the literature of Dharmaśāstra into three well-marked but somewhat overlapping periods : that of ancient Dharma-sūtras and of the Manu-smṛti, dating from, at least, the 6th century B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era ; the period when most of the versified smṛtis were composed, ranging from the 1st century of the Christian era to about 800 A.D. ; The third period, that of the commentators and writers of digests, covering over a thousand years from about 7th century to 1800 A.D.' (*History of Dharamashastra* I, p. 246). Mm Dr H. P. Shastri says, "That was the time when the Mahammedans made determined attempt to conquer the greater part of India but succeeded only in annexing the Panjab ; Hinduism received a rude shock at the repeated raids and iconoclastic efforts of the ruler of Ghazni and they began, from this time, to regulate more rigidly their social and domestic affairs, in case of their political power might go. That led to the system of writing digests of law in different kingdoms of India". (Preface to *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. III).

The same reason may be assigned in the case of Assam too. Though the earliest record of Mahammedan invasion of Assam shows it to have taken place in 1205 A.D., the date of the dated kānaī-baraśī-bowa rock of Gauhati. The possibility of such invasion was foreseen by people of this eastern-most part of India and they were threatened to become alert earlier. Then in order to preserve Hindu society intact from external intercourse the social leaders under the patronage of kings had to reduce everything to writing and make them more and more rigid. Some metrical works dealing with the subject-matter of Dharamaśāstra were compiled in ancient Kāmarūpa by which the principal local customs too had been codified and raised up to the same level of other religious rites. Among such works the following deserve mention here.

1. *Āṅgirasa-saṁhitā* : One incomplete and worn out old manuscript of this work, containing 60 folios, made of sāci bark, measuring about 22″ × 5¼″ has been procured from Thaneswar Deva Sharma Bhiṣagratna of village Kararā, Kamrup ; and has been preserved in the library of Kāmarūpa Saṁskrita Sanjīvanī Sabhā at Nalbari, Kamrup. There are about 4,000 ślokas in the total. The work is devided into more than 12 chapters. Up till now three Dharmaśāstras, attributed to sage Āṅgirasa are found in printed form. One of them was published in the *Dharmaśāstra Saṁgraha* edited by Pt. Jivanananda Vidyasagara, Vol. I, pp. 554-560 (Calcutta). It has only 72 ślokas. The second, *Āṅgirasasmṛti*, containing 169 ślokas was published in the *Smṛtīnāṃ Samuccayaḥ* from Anandāśrama Series, No. 48, 1905, pp. 1-8. It appears to be an enlarged version of the former work. The third *Āṅgirasa-smṛti*, edited by A. N. Krishna Aiyangar has been published in *Brahmavidyā*, the Adyar Library Bulletin, 1953. The text of this

work which is completely different from the above-mentioned works, is divided into two parts as *Pūrvāṅgirasa* and *Uttarāṅgirasa,* containing a total of 1277 ślokas. The text of the present work is completely different from that of all the published *Aṅgirasa-smṛtis*. Internal evidences lead us to presume it to be compiled somewhere in Kāmarūpa earlier than the 14th century A.D.

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The second work of its kind is the *Svalpamatsyapurāṇa,* which must be accepted as composed in ancient Kāmarūpa earlier than 11th century A.D.[15]

3. Another puranic work under the name of *Dharmapurāṇa,* which is probably included into the Sṛṣṭi-Khanda of the extant *Padmapurāṇa* was compiled here earlier than the 13th century A.D. Several verses from this work have been found quoted in later smṛtinibandhas of this province including the *Smṛtipadma,* which is mentioned by Dāmodara-miśra in 1434 A.D.

4. *Yoginītantra* : the first part and up to the 9th paṭala of the second part, which is known as *Kāmarūpādhikāra* of this big work has been published in printed form. But we have noticed *Yoginītantra* manuscripts which run up to the 15th paṭala of the *Kāmarūpādhikāra.* Almost all verses quoted by Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya of Bengal and Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa of Assam, with reference to the *Yoginītantra* are found in these manuscripts. That is why the time of composition of the *Yoginītantra* should be assumed as earlier than, at least, the 15th century A.D., while the opinion of some scholars that the work was composed during the 2nd half of the 16th century A.D. may not be credited now.

5. Another tantric work of Dharmaśāstra nature is the *Matsyasūkta,* of which only one incomplete and very worn out copy was noticed by me in the family collection of Maheswar Bhaṭṭācārya of village Bahjani, Kamrup. Some verses from this work are found quoted with reference to its name by Dāmodara-miśra, Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa and Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya. This work of tantra contains rules and procedures of śrādha, saṁskāra aśauca, varṣakṛtya, etc.

6. The *Hara-gaurīsaṁvāda* or *Hara-gauri-tantra* is another tantra-cum-Dharmaśāstra text probably composed in Kāmarūpa earlier than the 15th century A.D. from which some Kāmarūpīya smṛtinibandhakāras quoted dicta.

The above-mentioned purāṇas and tantras are traditionally accepted as equally authoritative with other Dharmaśāstra text by smṛtinibandhakāras of medieval age in Kāmarūpa as well as in Bengal.

7. Another Dharmaśāstra text entitled *Gṛhyapāraskara* which appears to be compiled later than the 15th century A.D. is found in manuscript. Several verses quoted with reference to the name of Pāraskara are found in

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[15] Sastri, "The Svalpamatsyapurāṇa", *Journal of the Ganganath Jha Research Institute,* Allahabad, vol. IX, Parts 2-4, November, 1953.

various smṛtinibandhas. None of them, except a few quoted by Ripuñjaya during the 17th century A.D., is noticed in this manuscripts. During that time, there had also been compiled some metrical nibandhas on Dharmśāstra which exercised great influence over the earlier nibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa, and Bengal. Among such works the following deserve mention here :

8. *Smṛti-mīmānsa* : Many verses from this work have been found quoted by Jīmūtavāhana of Bengal and almost all nibandhakāras of Assam including Nīlāmbarācārya and Dāmodara-miśra. So the work may be asumed to have been compiled earlier than the 12th century A.D. No manuscript of the work is available.

9. *Dhavala-saṁgraha* : It was a metrical smṛtinibandha composed by one Dhavaleśvara, several verses from this work being found quoted in the *Kāla-viveka* of Jīmūtavāhana and nearly in all the smṛtinibandhas of Kāmarūpa. The time of this work may be earlier than the 12th century A.D. Nowhere has the manuscript of the work been noticed up to present time.

10. The *Smṛtisamuccaya* was an important digest of Dharmaśāstra from which many smṛtinibandhakāras of Bengal and Kāmarūpa had taken dicta, mentioning it under various names such as *Ācārasamuccaya*, and *Vyavahāra-samuccaya*, according to topics dealt with in its different parts. The work was compiled by one Satkavi Viśveśvara somewhere in ancient Kāmarūpa at a date earlier than the 12th century A.D. It is known that two incomplete MSS, of the work are preserved in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

11. The *Tātparya-nibandha*, a metrical text known as Kāmarūpa-nibandha, being a complete code of Dharma, is often quoted by all prominent digest writers of ancient Assam including Śulapāṇi, and Raghunandana of Bengal.

12-13. There is the traditional belief that there were a commentary on the *Manusaṃhitā* by Nārāyaṇa Sarvajña and a commentary on the *Yājñavalkya-saṃhitā* by Ạcārya Vimalabodha, formerly in vogue in Kāmarūpa. But several years of long search for Sanskrit manuscripts in Assam has not enabled us to get only these commentries but even a complete copy of the *Manusaṃhitā* or the *Yājnñavalkya-saṃhatā*. Only the authenticity of this tradition has been partly confirmed when we happened to notice in the *History of Dharmaśāstra* by P. V. Kane, the following note "Nārāyaṇa Sarvajña, author of Manvartha Vivṛti, of Kāṁadhenu-dīpikā, and of Suddhi-dīpikā is mentioned by Rāyamukuṭa (1431 A.D.)."[16] Some passages are found quoted by Dāmodara-miśra and other smṛtinibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa under various names as Sarvajña, *Sarvajña-nibandha*, *Ācārasarvajña*,

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[16] Vide History of Dharmashastra vol. I, p. 108.

विमलबोधपादास्त्वेवं व्याचक्षते विशिष्टास्तनवो वितनवः वितनव एव वैतनवः ।

(Vide MS. in the Literary of Bengal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p. 9*a*).

Vyavahāra-sarvajña. Regarding Vimalabodha's commentary on the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* we have not found any definite proof so far. Nīāmbarācārya repeatedly mentions the view of Ācārya Vimalabodha and of Nārāyaṇa Sarvajña in his commentary on the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, called 'Aṃśa prakāsīkā.[16] It definitely proves that there existed two scholars before the 13th century A.D., known by the names Vimalabodha and Nārāyaṇa Sarvajña, who probably wrote commentaries on the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya mentions a commentary on the *Yājñavalkya-saṁhitā*, written by Devabodha, in the *Suddhitattva*. It is not impossible that Devabodha and Vimalabodha may be one and the same person. From this fragmentary information, it may only be assumed that Sarvajñanārāyaṇa and Vimalabodha or Devabodha were prominent figures in Sanskrit learning of eastern India prior to the 13th century A.D.

14. A nibandha writer of Kāmarūpa school of Dharamaśāstra, named Śaṅkhadhara, became prominent, but his work is not available at present. His opinion is mentioned almost in all the smṛtinibandhas of Kāmarūpa and Bengal.

The nibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa had been so much influenced by three nibandhakāras of Bengal, namely, Jīmūtavāhana, Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa and Halāyudha that their works were equally regarded with Kāmarūpīya nibandhas, and the rules and procedure of religious rites prescribed in their works were followed in Assam more faithfully than in Bengal. Even now many Brahman families of this State, who are the followers of old theory (prācīna mata) perform their ten consecration ceremonies (daśa-saṁskāra) according to the paddhatis by Paśupati or Halāyudha whereas some Brahman families of Upper Assam, being the followers of the Parvatīyā Gosāins perform their religious ceremonies according to the Navya-Smārta-paddhatis (Paddhatis compiled by Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya of Bengal). And the Brahmans who migrated from Sylhet, follow the Śrīhaṭṭa school of Dharmaśāstra, which is mainly formed of smṛtinibandhas, written by Vāchaspati Miśra of Mithilā and other Gauḍanibandhas.

Moreover, migrating Brahman families belonging to Mithilā, Rāḍha, Bārendra, Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa very often carried along with them thin

[16] "इत्येते वःसमाख्याता इति पाठो विमलबोधपादानां सम्मतः ।"

"चतुर्विद्या जरायुजाण्डजस्वेदजोद्भिदाख्याः स्थावरान्ताःस्थावरसहिता इति सर्वज्ञेन विवृतं ।"

"वेदस्मृतिमुखा इति वेदःस्मृतिश्चमुखं यासां तास्तथा ।
मुखत्वं च वाचकत्वेनेति नारायणसर्वज्ञः ।"

[17] "तथाच मित्राक्षरायां देवबोधकृतयाज्ञवल्क्यटीकायां च ।"

—Śuddhitattva, p. 236.

traditional heritage from one place to another. Therefore, some of the smṛtinibandhas or their authors followed by such families may be regarded as belonging to different localities and different nationalities. That is why Jitendriya, Bālaka, Yogloka, Sambhrama Bhaṭṭa and Andhuka Bhaṭṭa, mentioned by Jīmūtavāhana of Bengal and many nibandhakāras of Assam, are regarded as belonging to ancient Kāmarūpa by traditional pundits of Kāmarūpa and Bengal. Almost the whole of the eastern Bengal and a portion of West Bengal were once parts of Kāmarūpa.

15. Of all the smṛtinibandhakāras of the Kāmarūpa school, whose works are available in manuscript, Nīlāmbarācārya is the earliest. He flourished in the 13th century A.D. and wrote three smṛtinibandhas namely, *Kāla-kaumudī,* (dealing with appropriate time of religious rites), *Śrāddha-bhaṣyam* or *Śrāddhaprakāśa* (an extensive comentary on Śrāddhasūtras of Kātyāyana) and *Candraprabhā* (dealing with prāyaścitta and aśauca).[18] Besides these, a commentary on the *Viṣṇpurāṇa* entitled 'Aṁśaprakāśikā' was written by the same author which testifies to his profound scholarship and wide study in differend branches of Sanskrit learning, specially in philosophy. Only one manuscript of it is preserved in the library of Bengal Asiatic Society in Calcutta.

16. The *Smṛtiratnākara* by Vedācārya, son of Viṣṇūpādhyāya (1250-1350) is a prominent smṛtinibandha belonging to the Kāmarūpa school, exercising a great influence over society even now.[19]

17. The *Varṣapradīpa* by Śrīdhara Bhaṭṭa, which is mentioned almot by all smṛtinibandhakāras of Kāmarūpa, including Dāmodara-miśra of the first half of the 15th century A.D. is a substantive work of *Saṁvatsara-pradīpa* by Halāyudhācārya. A copy of this work is preserved in the library of the K. S. S. Sabhā.

18. A smṛtinibandha entitled *Smṛtipadma* by an anonymous anthor, dealing with prāyaścitta (purificatory ceremony) has a noted place among the smṛtinibandhas of Kāmarūpa. The probable time of compilation of this work may be placed sometime during the 14th century A.D., because it is mentioned by Dāmodara-miśra of the 15th century A.D. in his *Gaṅgājala.* The work is available in manuscript.

19. In the galaxy of Kāmarūpīya smṛtinibandhakāras Mahāmahopadhyāya Rājaguru Dāmodara-miśra has a place like that of Śūlapāṇi among the Bengal digest writers. His works, *Smṛtisāgara, Gangājala,* etc., are even now strictly followed all over Assam.[20]

20. The *Prāyaścittanirūpaṇa* by one Vajra Kandali, dealing with

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[18] Vide 'Nīlāmbarācārya' an article by present writer published in 'Indian Historical Quarterly.

[19] Sastri, 'Vedācārya and Samvatsara', *Journal of the Assam Research Society,* Vol. XIV, 1960.

[20] Sastri, 'Mahāmahopādhyāya Rājaguru Dāmodara Mishra', *Journal of the University, of Gauhati,* 1954 and 1956.

prāyaścitta deserves to be mentioned here. The author appears to have flourished somewhere in Upper Assam earlier than the 16th century A.D. Only one incomplete and mostly worn out manuscript of it is preserved in the library of the K. S. S. Sabhā.

21. The *'Smṛti-kalpadruma'* by satpandita Ananta Kandali, a renowned Vaiṣṇava poet of Assam, deserves to be mentioned among the smṛtinibandhas of the 16th century A.D. The work deals with prāyaściitta. Only one incomplete manuscript of it is preserved in the library of K. S. S. Sabhā.

22. Ratnākaramiśra is another smṛtinibandhakāra of the 16th century A.D. His work *Sārasaṁgraha* dealing with prāyaścitta has been found in manuscript. The author was a Vaiṣṇava poet in Assamese and a direct disciple of Harideva, a nenowned Vaiṣnva guru who was the founder of the Haridevi branch of Assam Vaiṣṇavism.

23. Mahāmahopādhyāya Jagadguru Pītāmbara Siddhānta-vāgiśa Bhaṭṭācārya simply known as Vāgiśa-Bhaṭṭācārya occupies the higest and brightest place among the smṛtinibandhakāras of the Kāmarūpa school. Regarding his birth place and the life very little is know to us. Among the Sanskrit pundits of the Kāmarūpa district and the Mangaldai sub-division of the Darrang district, where descendants of Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭacārya are living now, a tradition prevails that he was born in the village, Sārābārī of the Mangaldai sub-division. After he had attained a reputation for his scholarship, the atention of King Naranārāyaṇa and his brother, Cilārāya, was drawn towards him. When he was taken to Koc Behār, the capital of the Kāmarūpa kingdom, and being appointed Rājaguru he adorned the royal court till the death of King Naranārāyaṇa. The king became so much pleased with him that he made the grant of a vast area of land to him and some other Brahmaṇs too, according to choice of Vāgīśa-Bhaṭṭācārya in his birth place and near by it. From that time this particular area became known by the name of Cilākonā, or Cinakonā after the name of General Cīlārāya. The king was also extermely pleased with his scholarship that he honoured Vāgīśa, conferring on him the higest title 'Mahāmahopādhyāya' and 'Jagadguru'. After the death of King Naranārāyaṇa Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya continued his office for some years in the court of King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa of Koc Behar, son of Naranārāyaṇa, while he had to come frequently to the court of King Raghudeva, son of Cilārāya at the request of the latter, only determining to help and persuade the king to have reconstructed the Hayagriva-Mādhava temple at Hājo.

After completion of the temple the Vāgīśa took to live at a village named Dadhikṣīrā on the foot of Maṇiparvata near the Mādhava temple. (Probably the modern Dadhi was known as Dadhikṣīrā in those days.)

When Raghudeva passed away and his eidest son, Parīkṣitanārāyaṇa, took over the administration of his father's kingdom, he had to remove his capital to Noth Gauhati nearby Aśvaklānta and the Vāgīśa had to accompany him there. He continued his active life in the court of King Parīkṣitnārāyaṇa till the death of the king. Later he came to Darrang with King Balinārāyaṇa, known also as Dharmanārāyaṇa, who had to leave his ancestor's capital and to settle in his new capital in Darrang being allied to the Āhom kings. According to the choice of the Vāgīśa the king built a comfortable residence for him in his birth place in modern Sarābārī at a distance of about 12 miles from the capital. Thus Bhaṭṭācārya returned to his birth-place where he spent the remaining few years of his long life. (We have collected this information from old teachers and from the late Jagannath Bhattacharya, a learned descendant of Pitambara Bhaṭṭācārya.)

Padmanath Vidyavinod had accepted the authenticity of this tradition and supported his explanation of the word, 'Dakṣiṇakula', occurring in Balavarma's copperplate, as meaning the right side of the Lauhitya on the basis of a verse of Pītāmbara Siddhānta-vāgīśa.[21] Another writer, Ghanakanta Sharma, too refers to the tradition that Pitambara was born in the Sarābārī Mauzā of the Mangaldai sub-division.[22] In the final verse of the *Vivāda-kaumudī* the author clearly informs us that he was born on the right side of the river Lauhitya ;[23] and at the end of the *Daṇḍa-kaumudī* he states that his residence was on the right side of the Lauhitya.[24]

The *Darang-rājavaṁśāvalī*, vv. 585-86, informs us that when Raghudeva, son of Cilārāya, was born the general had pleased the Brāmans, inhabiting the village Cinākonā, with gifts of *kanakāñjali* (handful of gold) and land. It follows that the Brahmans inhabiting the village Cinākonā, as narrated in the traditional story, were favourites of the Koc kings. In many of the concluding verses and colophons of his prominent works the author has styled himself as 'Kāmarūpapatipaṇḍita', 'Jagatguru', 'Rājaguru' and Mahāmahopādhyāya. In the final verse of the Pañca-Yajñakaumudī he lets us know that Vāgīśa Bhaṭṭacārya was the court pundit of King Malladeva (Naranārāyaṇa), and that the king was pleased very much with his scholarhip.[25] The colophon of the *Grahaṇa-Kaumudī* indicates that the work was compiled under the rule of King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. At the end of the *Ekādaśī-kaumudī* the author informs us that the compilation of the work was finished when Parīkṣitnārāyaṇa was reigning over this country.[26] The fragmentary information found in his writings leads us to accept the aforesaid tradition as unquestionably true. The Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya gives us very little information about himself. There are no means to know the names of his parents. Only at the opening verse of the *Śrāddhakaumudī* he tells us that he studied all śāstras with his learned father.[27] Almost in all opening verses of his works except four, namely, the *Tīrtha-kaumudī, Durgotsava-kaumudī, Śivarātri-kaumudī* and *Guḍhārtha-kaumudī,* the author prays to Viṣṇu in different incarnations.

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[21] *Kāmarūpa-śasanāvalī*, p. 85-n.

[22] *Journal of the Assam Research Şociety*, Vol. X, Nos. 3-4, July-October, 1943.

[23] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 100 :

पीताम्बरेण गुणसुन्दरमन्दिरेण
कामेश्वरीचरणरेणुपरायणेन ।
लौहित्यदक्षिणकुलेऽपिसमुद्भवेन
भूयात् कृतः कृतिमुदे रुचिरो निबन्धः ॥

[24] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 90 :

पीताम्बरेण लौहित्यदक्षकुलनिवासिना ।
कृतोऽयं संग्रहोभूयाद्भूतये विदुषां मुदे ॥

Regarding the works compiled by him there is a tradition that the Vāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya is the author of 18 kaumudis. Taranath Goswami Smritiratna of Gauripur in Goalpara published the following list of works, supposed to have been compiled by Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya, in a footnote of the Śrāddha-kaumudi, edited by himself:

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[25] आलोक्य संग्रहचयं विचिन्त्य च ग्रन्थमेतमतुलं मनोरमम् ।
मल्लदेवनृपपण्डितः कृतीनिर्म्ममे सकलशास्त्रकोविदः ॥

इति श्रीश्रीमहाराजाधिराजकामरूपभूमण्डलाखण्डलश्रीमल्लदेवप्रसादविमण्डितपण्डितराजगुरुमहामहोपाध्यायश्रीपीताम्बरसिद्धान्तवागीशभट्टाचार्यविरचितापञ्चयज्ञकौमुदीसमाप्ता ॥

Noticed in the MS. in the family collection of late Devajit Devasharma, of vill. Ghorasal, Mangaldai.

[26] इति श्रीमल्लक्ष्मीनारायणनरपतिराज्ये महामहोपाध्यायजगद्‌गुरुस्तुप्रशस्त्यलंकृतिमद्-विराजमानेन श्री

—K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 1045.

इति महामहोपाध्यायजगद्‌गुरुश्रीसिद्धान्तवागीशभट्टाचार्येण श्रीश्रीमहाराजाधिकारकामरूपाखण्डलप्रचण्डप्रतापश्रीश्रीपरीक्षितनारायणनरपतिराज्ये कृतैकादशीकौमुदी समाप्ता ॥

—K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 122.

[27] *Śrāddha-kaumudī,* printed ed.

तातादधीत्याखिलशास्त्रसारं
कल्पद्रुमादीन् बहुशोविलोक्य ।
पीताम्बरः पूजितपीतवस्त्रः
तनोति यत्नात् पितृकृत्यकौमुदीम् ॥

(1) दायकौमुदी, (2) श्राद्धकौमुदी, (3) मलमासकौमुदी, (4) निर्णयकौमुदी, (5) सम्बन्धकौमुदी, (6) तत्त्वकौमुदी, (7) आह्निककौमुदी, (8) विवादकौमुदी, (9) अशौचकौमुदी, (10) तिथिकौमुदी, (11) प्रेतकौमुदो, (12) शुद्धिकौमुदी, (13) पञ्चयज्ञकौमुदी, (14) दीक्षाकौमुदी, (15) जन्माष्टमीकौमुदी, (16) दुर्गोत्सवकौमुदी, (17) वृषोत्सर्गकौमुदी, (18) संस्कारकौमुदी।

Another pundit, Gopalchandra Bhāgavatī Smriti-Taraka-vyakarana-tirtha, who wrote Sanskrit commentaries on four works of the Vāgiśa-bhaṭṭā-cāryā in print gives another list of the Siddhānta-Vāgīśa's works in his edition of the *Sambandha-kaumudī*. This list contains the names of 28 *kaumudīs*, of which the following ten are in addition to the above-mentioned eighteen:

(19) संक्रान्तिकौमुदो, (20) तीर्थकौमुदी, (21) दशकर्म्मकौमुदी, (22) प्रमाणकौमुदी, (23) पत्रकौमुदी, (24) प्रायश्चित्तकौमुदो, (25) ज्योतिषकौमुदी, (26) दण्डकौमुदी, (27) दीव्यकौमुदी and (28) साक्ष्यकौमुदी।

Ghanakanta Sharma accepted this list as it is, but instead of the *Saṁskāra-kaumudī* and *Durgotsava-kaumudī* mentioned in the former lists he referred to the *Vyavahāra-kaumudī* and *Kṛtya-kaumudī*.[28]

It will have been noted that these three lists considerably differ from one another so that no one of them may be accepted as correct. there is no evidence of the existence of works of the Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya with the following name,—*Aśauca-*, *Nirṇaya-*, *Tattva-*, *Patra-*, *Jyotiṣa-*, *Dīvya-*, *Sākṣya-* and *Kṛtya-kaumudī*. There is no reason of a work named *Asauca-kaumudī* on the impurity written by the Vāgīśa, while he compiled the *Śuddhi-kaumudī* on the same subject. Similarly the topics evidence (sākṣya), ordeals (dīvya), and ten consecrations (saṁskāra-karma) have been discussed in the *Vyavahāra-kaumudī* and *Daśa-karma-kaumudī*. It was needless on his part to compile separate works on these subjects under different titles. A book under the name of *Patra-kaumudī* is available in manuscript dealing with the composition of letters. Its authorship is attributed to one Vararuci and not to Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya. Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya, the renowned Bengal digest-writer, compiled 28 smṛtinibandhas with titles signifying the subject-matter of works in the first part and ending with the word *tattva*. It is probably this idea of these 28 *tattvas* which has led scholars to the notion of 28 *kaumudīs* having been written by Pītāmbara, and to the invention of some names of nibandhas *ad hoc*.

Dr Kane in his list of smṛti works appended to the first volume of his *History of Dharmashastra* mentions a work under the name of *Kṛtya-*

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[28] Ghanakanta Sharma, 'Pītāmbara Siddhānta-Vāgīśa', *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. X, July and October 1943.

kaumudī of Siddhānta-vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya noted to be found in the catalogue of manuscripts of the Baroda Oriental Institute. But a scrutiny of the description of the work in the said catalogue reveals that the actual name of the work is *Pītṛ-kṛtya-kaumudī*, being a synonym for *Śrāddha-kaumudī*—tanoti yatnāt pitṛ-kṛtya-kaumudīm.

We give below on our own a list of the Śiddhāntavāgīśa's works with the mention of our sources of information.

(1) *Dvaita-nirṇaya-dīpikā* : A commentary on the *Dvaitanirṇaya* of Vācaspati-Miśra of Mithilā. The work is mentioned by the author himself in his *Gūḍhārtha-prakāśikā*, *Śrāddhakaumudī* and *Pretakaumudī*,[30] and a manuscript of this work has been noticed in the manuscript library of the Calcutta Government Sanskrit College.

(2) *Gūḍhartha-kaumudī* : A commentary on the 'Śāradatilaka' (tantra) by Lakṣmaṇopādhyāya. It is mentioned by the author in his *Durgotsava-kaumudī* and *Pretakṛtya-kaumudi*.[31] A copy of the book is mentioned by Dr P. V. Kane in the appendix to the *History of Dharmashastra*, Vol. I, and noted to be found in the catalogue of the India Office Library, London. Another copy was procured by me from Pt. Ambikanath Bhattacharya of village Dhurkuchi, Kamrup, and is deposited in the K.S.S. Sabhā Library.

(3) *Vāstu-yāga-paddhati* is mentioned by the author in the Gūḍhārtha Prakaśikā.[32] An incomplete and worn out copy has been preserved in the same library.

(4) *Jalāśaya-pratiṣtha-paddhati* is mentioned in the *Guḍhārtha-prakāśikā* by the author.[33]

(5) *Homa-paddhati* is mentioned in the *Guḍhātha-prakāśikā* by the author.[34]

(6) *Graha-yāga-paddhati'* A manuscript copy of this work was

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[29] History of Dharmashastra p. 535.

[30] अधिकं मत्कृतद्वैतनिर्णयदीपिकायामनुसन्धेयम् ।

[गूढार्थप्रकाशिका Ms. K.S.S. Sabhā p.18]

अधिकं द्वैतनिर्णयदीपिकायां द्रष्टव्यम् । [प्रे: कौ: MS. 433, p. 95]

अधिकं द्वैतनिर्णयदीपिकायाम् । [श्रा: कौ: MS. 1164, p. 44] etc.

[31] अधिकं शारदाटीकायामनुसन्धेयम् । [दु: कौ: MS. 24, p. 18A]

अधिकं शारदाटीकायाम् । [प्रे: को: MS. 433, p. 91]

[32] अस्मत्कृतवास्तुयागपद्धतावनुसन्धेयम् । [गू: प्र: MS., K.S.S., p. 19A]

[33] अस्मत्कृतजलाशयप्रतिष्ठापद्धतावनुसन्धेयम् । [*Ibid*, p. 20A]

[34] अस्मत्कृतहोमपद्धतावनुसन्धेयम् । [*Ibid*, p. 40B]

noticed in the family collection of the late Devajit Devasharma of village Ghorasal, Mangaldai.

(7) *Ādyārcā-paddhati* : The procedure of worshipping Durgā and Kāli. Copies of the work are noticed as having belonged to many priestly families of Mangaldai locality and Kamrup district.

(8) *Vṛsotsarga-paddhati*: Several manuscripts are seen in the possession of some (prints) belonging to the Mangaldai subdivision and the Kamrup district. One is preserved in the library of the K.S.S. Sabhā.

(9) *Pañca-yajña-kaumudī* : The name of the work is mentioned by the author in his *Śrādhakaumudī*[35] and a copy in śācipāt was noticed in the ancestral cellection of the late Devajit Devasharma of Ghorasal, Mangaldai.

(10) *Pramāṇa-kaumudī* is mentioned by the author himself in the *Śrādhakaumudī* and *Śuddhikaumudī.*[36] No manuscript of it has been found up till now.

(11) *Prāyaścitta-kaumudi*: Only one Ms. of this work was seen among those preserved in the family collection of the late Pt. Nityānanda Mishra of Janigog, Kamrup.

(12) *Tithi-kaumudī*: The name of this work has been found mentioned in *Varṣabhāskara* of Mahāmahopādhyāya Śambhunāth Miśra, 1716 A.D.[37]

(13) *Ācāra-kaumudī* is mentioned in the *Dinabhāskara* by the same author.[38]

The manuscripts of the following works of Pītāmbara have been procured and deposited in the K.S.S. Library.

(14) *Durgotsava-kaumudī*, mentioned in various works of the author ;

(15) *Vṛṣotsarga-kaumudī*, mentioned by the author in his *Śrāddha-kaumudī* ;

(16) *Saṁkrānti-kaumudī*, published with Assamese translation by Pt. Gopalchandra Bhagavati Tarka-smriti-vyakarana-tirtha of Kaithalkuchi, Kamrup ;

(17) *Ekādaśī-kaumudī* ;

(18) *Janmāṣṭamī-kaumudī* ;

(19) *Śivarātri-kaumudī*,

(20) *Sambandha-kaumudī* or *Udvāha-kaumudī* (published by Pt. Gopalchandra Bhagavati with a Sanskrit commentary written by himself);

(21) *Vivāda-kaumudī* ;

[35] प्रपञ्चः पञ्चयज्ञकौमुद्याम् । [श्राः कौः, MS. No. 1168,p. 41A]

[36] अधिकं प्रमाणकौमुद्याम् । [*Ibid* p. 41A and शुः कौः MS. 51, p. 9B]

[37] भीमपराक्रमतिथिकौमुदी पाश्चात्यसंग्रहनिर्णयामृत-औत्कलीय तिथिसारादिषु । MS. No. 221, p. 44A]

[38] आचारकौमुद्यां वागीशभट्टाचार्याः । [दिनभास्कर MS. 117B. p. 11A]

(22). *Dāya-kaumudī,* being the last part of the *Vivāda-kaumudī,* but traditionally treated as a separate work (published by Pt. Ramanath Vidyalankara of Gauripur, Goalpara) ;

(23) *Vyavahāra-kaumudī* ; (Another MS. written in Devanagari is mentioned in the catalogue of manuscripts of the Oriental Institute of Baroda) ;

(24) *Daṇḍa-kaumudī* ;

(25) *Tīrtha-kaumudī,* mentioned by the author himself in his several works. (Another MS. in the Newary script is known to have been found in the Darbar Library of Nepal.) ;

(26) *Daśa-karma-kaumudī* or *Saṁskāra-kaumudī.* (The book was published by Pt. Gopalchandra Bhagavati of Kaithalukchi, Kamrup, with commentary and notes written by him.)

(27) *Śrāddha-kaumudī* (published by Pt. Taranath Goswami Smritiratna of Gauripur, Goalpara. Another manuscript is preserved in the manuscript library of Baroda Oriental Institute ; which has been wrongly described in the catalogue under the name of *Kṛtyakaumudī.*) ;

(28) *Preta-kṛtya-kaumudī* (published by Pt. Gopalchandra Bhagavati with a Sanskrit commentary written by himself) ;

(29) *Śuddhi-kaumudī* (published by Pt. Ramanath Vidyalankara of Gauripur with a Sanskrit commentary by himself) ;

(30) *Grahaṇa-kaumudī* (Another MS. of it has been preserved in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati) ;

(31) *Dīkṣā-kaumudī* ;

The *Saṁkrānti-, Ekādaśī-, Janmāṣṭami-* and *Śivarātri-kaumudīs* appear to be included in one big work named *Tithi-kaumudī* and the *Dāya-kaumudī* is, no doubt, included in the *Vivāda-kaumudī.* So the works for which the Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭācārya coined a common name with kaumudī added to words signifying the subject-matter before it, is eighteen in total. Probably for this reason he came to be known as the author of the eighteen Kaumudis.

At the end of the *Pañca-yajña-kaumudī* the Vāgīśa states that he compiled this work under the patronage of King Malladeva, who being pleased, honoured him with rewards. Colophons found at the end of many of his works show that he was styled as mahāmahopādhyāya and jagadguru. It may be inferred that it was Malladeva who conferred the epithet of jagadguru on him. Malladeva or Naranārāyaṇa was on the throne from c. 1540 to c. 1586.

Pitāmbara's *Grahaṇa-kaumudī* was written in Śaka 1522 (1600 A.D.) when Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa reigned over Koc Behār. Tradition has it that after the death of Naranārāyaṇa Bhattācārya went on satisfying both the kings Lakṣminārāyaṇa and Raghudeva with his frequent presence in their courts and occasional advice, and that after the reconstruction of the Hayagriva-

Madhava temple he settled in village Dadhikṣirā near the Maṇiparvata. Raghudeva died in 1603 A.D.

Daityāri Ṭhākura in his *Śri-Śaṅkaradeva Sri-Mādhavadeva-carita*, vv. 2490-42, indicates that when Mādhavadeva went to Vijayanagara, the capital of Raghudeva (It must be before 1603 A.D.) he met one Vāgīśa-bhaṭṭcārya, who was considerably old. This must be possibly a reference to Pītambara Siddhānta-vāgīśa. His *Ekādaśī-kaumudī* was compiled during the time of Parīkṣitanārāyaṇa.

Pitāmbara wrote the *Vivāda-kaumudī* in Śaka 1526 (1604 A.D.),[39] the *Vyavahāra-kaumudī* in Śaka 1530 (1607 A.D.)[40] and the *Śuddhi-kaumudī* in Śaka 1534 (1612 A.D.).[41]

The *Daṇḍakaumudī* was compiled when the author lived on the right bank of the river Lauhitya.[42] It is probable that this work was done by Bhaṭṭācārya when he lived in the new capital established by Parīkṣita-nārāyaṇa near Aṣvakrānta temple between 1605 and 1611 A.D.

From these slender and fragmentary information Pitāmbara may perhaps be assumed to have lived for about 90 years, from 1525 to 1615 A.D. I have not found any reliable basis for the assumption of Ghana-kanta Sharma that "Most of his works are dated, his activities as the royal Pandit (Vagisa) were during the last quarter of the 16th century and first quarter of the 17th century A.D.[43] So far as our knowledge goes, only these four works of Pītāmbara are dated, namely, the *Grahaṇa-*, (Śaka 1522), *Vivāda-* (Śaka 1526), *Vyavahāra-* (Saka 1530, or, as in one MS, Saka 1535[44]) and *Śuddhi-kaumudī* (Śaka 1534). These are all later than 1600 A.D. and earlier than 1615 A.D.

Regarding his wide scholarship we can collect our information from his works. He has referred to and quoted from, about 500 authorities, belonging to the different branches of Indian thought. In the initial and final verses of his *Śrāddha-kaumudī*, he states that he had studied all śāstras with his father and was well-versed in Nyāya and Mīmāṃsa.[44a]

From particularly the closing sections of his writings we get a fair idea that Pītāmbara had an exceptional command over a wide range of Sanskrit studies, a considerable fluency in argument, and a rare aptitude for verse and prose. He commanded a most honourable place in society, a great influence in royal courts, and a wide reputation throughout the country. His wonderful mastery over śāstras and his erudition, displayed in his works, earned for him the appellation, siddānta-vāgīśa-bhattacārya, or, simply, vāgīśa-bhattācārya, from later writers. Manuscript copies of his works, spread in different parts of India in the 17th century A.D., and are still to be found outside Assam,—in Bengal, Baroda, Nepal, etc. Passages from his works are quoted as authority by famous scholars of western India including Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa during 1612 A.D.[45] It follows that his reputation had spread and his scholarship was recognised all over India even during his life-time.

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[39] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 100.

[40] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 1220 (triṁśadhika-pañcadaśa-śata-śakābda, and variantly, pañcatriṁśadhika. . . . .)

[41] K.S.S. Sabhā MS 638.

[42] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 90.

[43] *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. X, July and October 1943.

[44] K.S.S. Sabhā MS. 1192.

[44a] तातादधीत्याखिलशास्त्रसारं कल्पद्रुमादीन् बहुशो विलोक्य ।
पीताम्बरः पूजितपीतवस्त्रस्तनोति यत्नात् पितृकृत्यकौमुदीम् ॥
नानामतं स्मृतिपुराणविदां विदित्वा ज्ञात्वा च गौतमनयं सह जैमिनीयम् ।
श्रीकामरूपधरणीपतिमण्डितेन वागीश्वरेण रचितो रुचिरो निबन्धः ॥

24. Next to Pītāmbara Ripuñjaya Bhaṭṭcārya is commonly known to the learned circle of Kāmarūpa. He was the ancestor of the Chakravarti family of village Sālkochā of the Goalpara district. He lived in the first half of 17th century A.D. and wrote a big digest on Dharma under the name *Pūrṇacandra*. The work is divided into three parts *Prāyaścitta-*, *Tithi-kṛtya-* and *Śrāddha-khaṇḍas* dealing with the subject indicated by name. This is an authoritative work of the Kāmarūpa school. A few manuscript copies of the work is preserved in the K.S.S. Sabhā Library.

25. The *Śaraṇa-saṁgraha* of Bhaṭṭdeva (Vaikuṇṭhanātha Bhāgavata Bhaṭṭācārya Kaviratna) one of the renowned Vaiṣṇava saints, the first Assamese translator of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is a work dealing with vaiṣṇavakṛtyas (ceremonial rites to be performed by Vaiṣṇavas). This is also a valuable contribution to the Kāmarūpa school of Dharmaśāstra written during the first half of 17th century A.D. The rules condified in this work were strictly followed in the Vaiṣṇava *sattras* of Assam.

26. The *Śrāddharatna* is a commentary on the *Śrādhasūtras* of Kātyāyana, written by one Nīlambarācārya ;

27. The *Saṁskāra-dīpikā* deals with the ten consecretional ceremonies by Śrīdhara-Miśra ;

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[45] श्राद्धकौमुद्यां कालिकापुराणे पूर्व्वार्द्धे विशेषतः शिवपूजां प्रमीतपितृको नरः ।
यावद्वत्सरपर्यन्तं मनसाऽपि न चाचरेत् ॥

* * * * *

श्राद्धकौमुदीकारास्तुद्वयोरेव महागुर्वोरब्दमेकमशौचकम् ।
नान्येषामधिकाशौचं स्वजाति विहितात् किल ॥
इति समूल जातुकर्णवचनविरोधान्निर्मूलमाहुः ।
See निर्णयसिन्धु तृतीय परिच्छेद, ed. pt. Jaulaprasada, p. 941 and श्राद्धकौमुदी, ed. Pt. Taranath Goswami pp. 199f.

28. The *Śraddha-candrikā* is very popular treatise on the procedure of different śrāddhas, compiled by Kalāpacandra ;

29. (1) The *Puṣpa-pradīpa* is a treatise on flowers which describes the flowers prescribed or prohibited on the occasion of different religious ceremonies, by Mahādeva Bhaṭṭācārya, son of Keśavācārya and (2) the *Adbhuta-sāra* deals with the procedure of adbhutaśānti (remedy of inauspicious omens) by the same author.

All these works were compiled during the 17th century A.D. and have contributed towards the growth of the Kāmarūpa school of Dharmaśāstra.

30. The *Smṛtinavanīta* of Chandra Kandali is a small smṛti-nibandha dealing with various topics of Dharma.

31. The *Śuddhicandra* of Kavirāja Miśra is a digest dealing with the funeral rites. This and the *Smṛtinavanīta* were probably written in eastern Assam during the first half of 18th century A.D. under the patronage of Āhom rulers.

32. Among the Kāmarūpīya smṛtinibandhakāras of post-Vāgīśa-Bhaṭṭācārya age, Mahāmahopādhyāya Śambhunātha Miśra Siddhānta-Vāgīśa, who is also known as the author of twelve *Bhāskaras* is the most prominent figure. He compiled an encyclopaedic work, divided into 12 big essays on different topics of Dharma, the name of each essay having at the end the word *bhāskara* (the sun), such as *Varṣabhāskara, Dina-bhāskara,* etc.

From the colophon of the *Varṣabhāskara* it is known that the author lived at Vaikuṇṭhapura near Jalpeśvara, the presiding deity of Ratnapītha, and compiled this work in the bright half of the month of Māgha in Śaka 1638 (1716 A.D.) under the patronage of Dharmadeva, the king of Koc-behāra. He also refers to his earlier works, *Varṣa-paddhati-bhāskara, Aśauca-bhāskara, Kṛtya-paddhati-bhāskara* and *Devī-pūja-bhāskara.* The time of his literary activity can be approximately taken to be the first quarter of 18th century A.D. The author raises strong and scholarly arguments against the new theory (navya-mata) mainly of the Smārta-Bhaṭṭācarya (Raghunandana) of Bengal, refutes them and establishies the old theory

[46] रत्नपीठाधिपश्रीमज्जल्पीशेश्वरसन्निधौ ।
माघे मासि सिते पक्षे ग्रन्थः सम्पूर्णतामगात् ॥
शाके दिग्गजशङ्कराक्षिशरजन्मास्येन्दुभिः सम्मिते
भूखण्डे जनतार्त्तिहारियशसः श्रीधर्म्मदेवस्य च ।
वैकुण्ठाख्यपुरे पुरारिपुरवन्नन्दीश्वरेणेक्षिते
चक्रेवत्सरभास्करं बुधमुदे सिद्धान्तमिश्रः कृती ॥
इति महामहोपाध्यायश्रीशम्भुनाथमिश्रसिद्धान्तवागीशभट्टाचार्यकृतो वर्षभास्करोऽयं समाप्तः ॥०॥

(prācīna-mata). That was the aim for which he had undertaken to compile the works.[47] It is interesting to note that Śambhunātha Miśra cites a number of authorities which shows his range of study and proficiency in all branches of Sanskrit learning. In the *Varṣabhāskara* alone he has mentioned about 300 names of authors and works. Of the twelve *Bhāskaras* traditionally known to be compiled by this author only the following four have come to our notice in the form of manuscripts:

(1) *Varṣabhāskara* (Two Mss. of this work are preserved in the library of the K.S.S. Sabhā), (2) *Dinabhāskara,* (3) *Kalabhāskara* (Only one incomplete manuscript of each of 2 and 3 has been preserved in the same library.), (4) *Vivāhabhāskara* (A manuscript copy of this work was seen in the hands of the late Pt. Chandrakanta Vidyalaṅkāra of village Gamerimuri, Kamrup.) (5) *Varṣapaddhatibhāskara,* (6) *Kṛtyapaddhati-bhāskara,* (7) *Asaucabhāskara,* (8) *Akālabhāskara,* and (9) *Devīpūjābhāskara.* (These five last treatises have been mentioned by the author in his Varṣabhāskara. Only tradition informs us of other three *Bhāskaras* of which neither mention nor manuscript is to be found anywhere else.)

There are scores of authors of small smṛtinibandhas, and of commentaries on original nibandhas belonging to the Kāmarūpa school of Dharmaśāstra. Only some of these are available in manuscript.. We do not want to proceed further to lengthen the paper by mentioning their names. The subject still awaits the critical and detailed investigation of enthusiastic scholars; and this, we hope, will be of absorbing interest and immense significance.

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[47] नवीनवाक्यतिमिराच्छन्नप्राचीनपद्धतेः ।
प्रकाशार्थं स्वमतितः सुधियां सुखहेतवे ॥
देवश्रीधर्म्मदेवस्य द्विजानामप्यनुज्ञया ।
श्रीशम्भुनाथमिश्रेण तन्यते वर्षभास्करः ॥
[See opening verses of Varṣabhāskara]

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Crypto-Buddhism in Kamarupa

By

MAHESWAR NEOG

In the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman, king of Kāmarūpa of the seventh century A.D. (verse 3) occurs the word *dharma* and in the Gauhati grant of Indrapāla of the eleventh century A.D. is the description of a spot *tathāgatakāritādityabhaṭṭārakasatkaśāsanabhaviṣā,* "the Bhaviṣā with the still existing charter of holy Āditya (or Sun God) made by Tathāgata" (as rendered by Dr. Hoernle). In his Puṣpabhadrā grant (verse 7) Dharmapāla (eleventh century) reminds the future kings that *dharma* is not to be abandoned. The occurrence of these words in these royal grants has been taken by some scholars as indication of the existence of Buddhism in ancient Kāmarūpa. These are however extremely doubtful evidences (Dr B. K. Barua: "Notices of Buddhism in Assam," *Mahamahopadhyaya Prof. D. V. Poddar Commemoration Volume,* 1950, p. 26). Archæology also does not bring forward any convincing proofs. Kanaklal Barua mentions some sculptured images on stones and terra-cotta plaques representing the Buddha which can be assigned to the tenth or eleventh century. Below the figure in a terra-cotta votive tablet found at Gauhati is inscribed the well-known Mahāyāna creed. But as he has pointed out, these images are of a portable nature and might easily have been imported from outside by itinerant Mahāyāna monks (*An Early History of Kāmarūpa*, pp. 155 f).

Hiuen Tsiang who visited Kāmarūpa in the first half of the seventh century remarks that there was no Buddhist monastery in the land, and that "whatever Buddhists there were in it performed their acts of devotion secretly" (Watters, *On Yuan Chwang,* vol. II, p. 186). This would show that though Buddhism did not prevail in the country on an organised scale nor was patronised by the king, traces of it were not absolutely found wanting. It could not be said if Hiuen Tsiang's mention of secret performances of Buddhists is a reference to the existence of some esoteric type of the religion. It will however be wide of the mark to infer that the Buddhists of Kāmarūpa did their acts of devotion in secret "evidently in fear of persecution" by the ardently Śaivite king, as has been supposed (*Indian Historical Quarterly,* vol. XXVI, Dec., 1950, p. 333). That Bhāskarvarman invited the Chinese pilgrim to his court convinces us that a sort of religious toleration was the rule of his days.

An inscription discovered at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa in the ancient Andhra country of the fourteenth regnal year of Māḍhariputa, probably identical with king Māḍhariputa Śrī Virapurisadata of the Ikṣvāku dynasty (third century A.D.), dedicated a shrine "for the benefit of the fraternities (of monks) of Taṁbapamna who had converted Kāśmīra, Gandhāra, Cīna, Cilāta, Tosali, Avaraṁta, Vaṁga, Vanavāsī, Yavana (?), Damila (?), Palura (?) and the Isle of Taṁbapaṁni" (*Ep. Ind.*, XX, pp. 22-23, Second Apsidal Temple, Insc. F. cited by Dr N. Ray, *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma,* pp. 14-15). It is noteworthy that Cilāta is here mentioned along with Cīna. The Cīnas and the Kirātas together manned the army of Bhagadatta of Kāmarūpa led to the Kurukṣetra war. In the Buddhist *Mahāvaṁśa* and in the Kūrmavibhāga section of the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā,* the Cīnas and Kirātas (*Cīlāta* in the former text) are together mentioned (Dr N. Ray, *op cit.*, pp. 15, 17). Dr Ray identifies Cīlāta of the inscription with Burma ; but it may very well mean Kāmarūpa, with which the Kirātas have always been associated.

The later and degenerate form of Buddhism called Vajrayāna or Tāntric Buddhism, "a queer mixture of monastic philosophy, magic and erotics, with a small admixture of Buddhist ideas" (Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature,* vol. II, p. 388), is considered by scholars to have originated in the seventh century A.D. It profounded the theory of Mahāsukhavāda and admitted the five *m's* (*makāras*)—wine, woman, fish, meat and all kinds of exciting food as indispensable for the votary. The seekers of salvation should enjoy Prajñāpāramitā or perfect truth that resides in every woman, high or low, young or old, healthy or diseased (Dr. B. Bhattacharya, *Buddhist Esoterism,* pp. 32 ff). This religion, associated with magic and sorcery, at once became popular. It gained ground through the teachings and mystic songs of the eighty-four Siddhapuruṣas and their disciples. The names of some of these Siddhas have been connected with Kāmarūpa in old accounts of them. In the Vajrayāna scripture *Sādhanamālā* (pp. 453, 455), moreover, the four *pīṭhas* of the cult are enumerated as Kāmākhyā or Kāmarūpa, Sirihaṭṭa, Pūrṇagiri and Oḍiyāna (Uddiyāna, Oḍḍiyāna or Oḍryan, *Sādhanamālā,* II, intro., xxxvii-n) While Kāmākhyā and Sirihṭṭa are evidently in Kāmarūpa, Oḍiyāna also is supposed by some scholars to be in the western part of the country (Dr B. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.,* pp. 45 f.). This veiw however has met with vehement criticism (Dr P. C. Bagchi, *IHQ.*, vol. VI, pp. 580 f.). Even Pūrṇagiri is said to be some Puṇyatīrtha (?) in Assam (Dr B. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.* p. 43-n). But there is no conclusive evidence to prove that this place was really in Kāmarūpa. It is sufficient that two out of these four places, which were possibly main centres of dissemination of Vajrayāna doctrines belonged to this country. In Sahajayāna the Siddhas likened the stations where the nerve-channels *lalanā, rasanā,* and *avadhūti* combined in the body to Uḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri and Kāmarūpa

(Dr P. C. Bagchi: "Some aspects of Buddhist mysticism of Bengal," *The Culture Heritage of India*, vol. I, pp. 312-13).

Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇagiri and Oḍḍiyāna seem to be also centres of Śākta Tāntricism. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* (18. 42-44) describes how during Śiva's wandering with the dead body of Satī on his shoulders, her feet, severed by divine magic, fell down at Devīkūṭa (in Bengal), the two thighs in Uḍḍiyāna, the genital organ on the mount Kāmagiri in Kāmarūpa, the navel a little east of that hill, the breasts at Jālandhara, the neck on Pūrṇagiri and the head beyond Kāmarūpa. In another place (68. 43-45) the same Purāṇa enumerates the four main *pīṭhas* as Oḍrapīṭha, Jālaśaila, Pūrṇapīṭha and Kāmarūpa. Oḍrapīṭha is in the west where the goddess resides in the form of Oḍreśvarī Kātyāyanī and her consort as Oḍreśa Jagannātha. It is therefore clear that Oḍḍiyāna at least here is a variation of Oḍra, modern Orissa. Pūrṇaśaila is described as situated in the south. Kāmākhyā or Kāmarūpa remains as one of the indisputable centres of Śākta and Buddhistic Tāntricism.

According to *Pag Sam Jon Zan* (index, pp. xli, lv) Saraha or Rāhulabhadra was a Buddhist sage born of a Brāhmaṇa and a Ḍākinī in the city of Rājñī in the Eastern country and flourished during the reign of Candanapāla of Prācya. Saraha or Sarahapā alias Sarahabhadra or Rāhulabhadra was one of the early *ācāryas*, who propounded the Tantra doctrines and practices, and is said to be an adept both in Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist lores. His place of birth Rājñī is probably the small principality of Rāṇī in western Assam (Kanaklal Barua: "Kāmarūpa and Vajrayāna," *Journ. of Assam Res. Soc.*, vol. II, p. 47 ; Dr B. K. Barua: "Notices of sorcery and its practices in Assam," *Journ. of University of Gauhati*, vol. I, p. 51). Giuseppe Tucci points out that according to the Tibetan work *Grub to'b* Rāhula was a Śūdra from Kāmarūpa, although in another work *bKa'babs bdun ldan* Rāhulabhadra is a Brāhmaṇa from Oḍivisa (*JASB.*, 1930, p. 141). Kanaklal Barua wishes to identify Candanapāla of Prācya with Ratnapāla (tenth-eleventh century A.D.) of the Brahmapāla dynasty of Kāmarūpa (*loc. cit.*). M. Shahidullah in his *Les Chants Mystiques de Kānhu et de Saraha* calls Saraha a man of Roli in Rājñī and a contemporary of Ratnapāla of Kāmarūpa (Kanaklal Barua: "The date of Saraha," *JARS.*, vol. II, p. 85).

Saraha's disciple is the famous Nāgārjuna. In the *Sādhanamālā* (pp. 193 f, 265 f) two *sādhanas* are ascribed to him, one for the worship of the goddess Vajratārā, the other for the worship of Ekajatā. The latter is said to have been rescued by Nāgārjuna from the country of Bhoṭa. Kanaklal Baru holds (*loc. cit.*, p. 48) that he was "well-known in Assam, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet though he may or may not have been a native of Kāmarūpa." He moreover says that probably the temple of Ugratārā at Gauhati was built by king Ratnapāla or his successor Indrapāla after the worship of Ekajaṭā (Ugratārā) was introduced by Nāgārjuna. The temple is considered by Śāktas to be *nābhi-pīṭha,* the sacred place where Satī's navel dropped. In the *Ārya-mañju-śrī-mūla-kalpa* (verse 900) Kāmarūpa is mentioned as a place where the worship of Tārā led to easy *siddhi.*

Tucci points out also that in *Grub to'b* and *bKa'babs bdun ldan* the Siddha Mīnanātha was a fisherman from Kāmarūpa (*op. cit.,* p. 133). Tāranātha describes Siddha Mīna and his son Siddha Macchindra both as disciples of Carpati. Mina was a fisherman in the east of India in Kāmarūpa (Dr Bhupendranath Datta, *Mystic Tales of Lama Tārānātha* 1944, p. 56. Also see Grünwedel, *Baessler-Archiv,* Band V, p. 152 cited in *IHQ.,* vol. VI, p. 181). Jayārtha's commentary on the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta (Trivandrum Skt. Series, pp. 24-25) quotes a verse from an earlier Tantra to the effect that Kaula-jñāna was transmitted from Bhairava, the fearful god, to Bhairavī, the goddess, and from her the Siddha Mīna or Macchanda acquired it in the *mahāpīṭha* of Kāmarūpa (*IHQ.,* vol. VI, pp. 179, 181). Mīnanātha later became known as the propounder of the Yoginī-kaula doctrine, popular in Kāmarūpa (Dr P. C. Bagchi, *Kaula-jñāna-nirṇaya,* Cal. Skt. Series, p. 55).

Another Buddhist teacher Padmavajra was the preceptor of Anaṅgavajra, who was according to Tārānātha, a son of 'king Gopāla of Eastern India.' Kanaklal Barua seeks to identify this king with the king of Kāmarūpa of the name, the great-grandson of Ratnapāla (*JARS.,* vol. II, p 49). He also thinks that the Kāmarūpa kings were initiated to the Vajrayāna tenet and in that connection refers to the word *dharma* occurring in the Puṣpabhadrā grant of Dharmapāla as an indication of Buddhism. He further adduces that the adherents of the esoteric sect called Rātī-khowā (night-worshippers), which indulges in the five *m's* and seeks salvation through women, may have been influenced by Vajrayāna practices (*ibid.,* pp. 50-51).

In his history of Buddhism in India Tāranātha describes how in the time of the venerable Dhītika, who succeded Upagupta to teachership, the Brāhmaṇa Siddha of Kāmarūpa brought offerings to the Sun god with a company of many thousands. Dhītika in a magical feat took the form of the Sun and preached the law of the Buddha to Siddha, who "perceived the truth, and living full of great faith, he built the Mahācaitya Vihāra, gave a great feast to the brethren of the four regions and spread the teaching of Buddha considerably in Kāmarūpa" (*IHQ.,* vol. V, p. 720).

In the Tibetan *Tanjur* is contained the translation of a tract called *Dhyāna-sad-dharma-vyavasthāna* by Avadhūtīpāda, identified with Ratnaśilā of Kāmarūpa (*IHQ.,* vol. XXVI, p. 334).

In the biographies of the Vaiṣṇava saint Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.) is described how he had encounters with Buddhist magicians (*Baudhamatīyā ṭaṭakīyā*). In his *Kīrtana-ghoṣā* he writes that the God Supreme incarnated as the Buddha only to destroy the way of the Vedas and confound people with *Vāmānaya śāstra* (left-handed scriptures). This is clearly a reference to the excesses committed by the Tāntric Buddhists as Śaṅkaradeva himself saw them. He further adds that the Kalki incarnation will descend on earth towards the end of the Kali age and will massacre the Mlecchas, exterminate all the Bauddhas that there be, and establish the Truth.

Rāma Sarasvatī, a Brāhmaṇa contemporary and disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, in his *Vyāsāśrama* (MS., verses 294-350) described how the Brāhmaṇas of the Kali age would take to the left-handed rites and scriptures (*Vāmānaya vidhi śāstra*) and turn Bauddha. They would profess by the Bauddha śāstras and give up the duties of Brāhmaṇas. They would earn their living by performing magical feats with funny idols made of copper, bell-metal, wood and earth.

Vaṁśīgopāladeva (later sixteenth century), a disciple of Śaṅkaradeva's followers, Dāmodaradeva and Mādhavadeva, met with great opposition and bitter enmity of the Bauddhas when he tried to propagate the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism in Asama rājya, modern Upper Assam (M. Neog, ed., *Vaṁśīgopāladevar Caritra,* 1950, intro.).

It is curiously remarkable that the Hayagrīva Mādhava temple at Hājo at a distance of fifteen miles from Gauhati is visited by the Buddhists from Bhutan and Tibet and even from Ladakh and south-western China. They consider Hājo as the place of the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa.* The present temple of Mādhava was built of the Koc king Raghudevanārāyaṇa of Kāmarūpa 1505 Śaka or 1583 A.D. on the ruins of an older shrine, supposed to have been destroyed by Kālāpāhār (Sir E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam,* 1926, p. 63). According to the Buddhist tradition, of Tibet and Bhutan, of course, the older shrine was the great Caitya erected over the cremated relics of the Tathāgata's body. The principal stone image of the shrine, called Mādhava by the Hindus, is considered by the Lāmās to be Mahāmuni or the Buddha. It may be mentioned here that the worship conducted in the temple of Bodh Gaya is that of Viṣṇu, but the deity is represented in an image of the Buddha and, curiously enough, Gait notes, the Mahant there is a Śaiva ascetic (*Census of India,* 1901, vol. I. pt. I, p. 361). In the Hājo temple the minor stone images of Lāl Kānāyā Vaṅkavihārī, Vāsudeva and Hayagrīva to the right of Mādhava, and that of Dvitīya Mādhava to the left are respectively called Dorje Dolo, Sakyā Thuba, Sencha Muni and Ugyar Guru by the Lāmā pilgrims. The rock, which is pointed out by the Buddhists as the place of death and cremation of the Lord and where there is the figure of a four-armed Viṣṇu, bears several roughly cut inscriptions in Tibetan characters of the mystic sentences *Om maṇipadme hum, Om ah hum, Om,* etc. The liṅga and yoni symbols enshrined on the bank of the Kamala lake on the Kedāranātha hillock are identified by the Lāmās as a mass of butter which was brought to the Buddha and set down by him there.

The Lāmās have thus and thus found a Buddhistic name and interpretation for every spot in the locality. They have made copies of this spot supposedly of Buddha's passing away (called by them Sil-wa ts'al-gi tur-do, 'the pyre of the cool grove') in at least four places in Tibet. They carry off scrapings of the rocks and soil in the locality and treasure them up in amulets to be placed beside their dead bodies as warrant against dire calamities here on earth and transmigration into lower animals hereafter. It is not definitely known if any Buddhist building here existed previous to the Lāmās' fixing on the site as the Kusanagara of the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa*. Hiuen Tsiang in the seventh century remarked that from the time when the Buddha appeared in the world even down to his own time 'there never as yet has been built one *Saṅghārāma* as a place for the priests to assemble." Tāranātha in the sixteenth century, on the other hand, refers to the great *stūpa* of Kusanagara as being situated in Kāmarūpa. Dr L. A. Waddell suggests that any Caitya or other Buddhist building must be subsequent to the seventh century A.D. and can only mark a site visited by the great founder of Lāmāism, Padmasambhava, or one of his disciples (*The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lāmāism,* 1895, pp. 307-314). The Bhutanese Lāmās visit Hājo in the cold season and worship the Mahāmuni. Some of them even burn a thumb or finger of the hand as an offering to the deity. This is a general Tāntric mode of worship symbolic of self-immolation in the name of a deity. E. Tuite Dalton went so far as to make this remark about the image of Mādhava: "Its modern votaries have, to conceal mutiliation, given it a pair of silver goggle-eyes, and a hooked, gilt or silvered nose, and the form is concealed from view by cloths and chaplets of flowers: but remove these and there is no doubt of the image having been intended for the 'ruler of all, the propitious, the asylum of clemency, the all-wise, the lotus-eyed, the comprehensible Buddha'" ("Notes on Assam temple ruins," *JASB.*, 1855, LXXI, pp. 8 ff.). The name Maṇikūṭa of the temple hillock also deserves some notice.

The Janārdana Viṣṇu image at Gauhati below the Śukreśvara hill is generally known as Bodh (Buddha) Janārdana. There is also a tradition that originally a Buddhist shrine stood where the temple of goddess Kāmākhyā now is (S. C. Goswami: "Hidden traces of Buddhism in Assam," *IHQ.*, vol. III, p. 755).

Living Buddhism in Assam

By

MAHESWAR NEOG

The living Buddhism of Assam can be broadly divided into two types, both received from outside India,—first, the Hīnayāna or Theravāda Buddhism of Burma which spread into Assam with the advent of the tribes known as Khāmti, Singhpho, Dowanīyā, Phākiyāl or Tāiphākė, Narā, Turung and Āitan or Aitanīyā from the Hukong Valley, the Barkhāmti land and the Shān States; and secondly, Lāmaism or Tibetan Buddhism, professed by some of the tribes of the North-East Frontier Agency—the Sherdukpen and the Monpā of the Kameng Frontier Division and the Membā and the Khāmbā of the extreme north of the Siāng Division. Beside these there are the Bhuṭiyās of the latter category, but they are mostly of a migratory type with rare exceptions. There are, moreover, some Buddhists from Chittagong including the Mags from Ārākān, and still others who have come to Assam in recent years and set up vihāras in Assam's capital, Shillong, and elsewhere.

Buddhists in Official Reports

The various census reports of Assam show the varying Buddhist population of Assam, including the hills on the north. The variation, of course, is sometimes due to the changes in the boundary of census enumeration more than for any other reason as will be seen below.

The 1881 Census of India gives 4,676,979 as Assam's total population (as against 3,946,054 in 1872). About the Buddist population the report says,—"The Buddhists number 6,563 and are found only in five districts of the Brahmaputra Valley. This religion is professed by people from Bhutan who inhabit the north edge of the valley, or who come down in the cold season to trade; by scattered remnants of the Burmese invasion called Mans, who live in a few villages mostly in Goalpara and Kamrup; and by Khamtis, Phakials and Aitonias, who inhabit the eastern portion of the Lakhimpur district, and have some settlements in the North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, and in the Nambor forest at the foot of the Naga Hills. The census of 1872 grouped Buddhists and Jains together, and gave the number in the valley as 1,472; none were returned in Goalpara; and Nowgong, which now has returned none, then had 291. The discrepancy has not been explained. The chief difference is in the Lakhimpur district, where 4,657 Buddhists are recorded now against only 449 in 1872. This number, however, very inadequately represents the Buddhist subjects of the Queen in this district, for the majority of the Khamtis and Phakials live beyond the Tengapani river, which was the limit of the census, though not the limit of British dominion. The number of the sexes are very unequal among the Buddhists. Males predominate in every district, but chiefly in Darrang, where they are 632 against 91 females. The disproportion is due to the fact that at that season of the year the Udalguri and Bengbari fairs were going on, and a large number of men from Bhutan and Towang came down to trade, and did not bring their women. The proportion of the sexes for all Buddhists is 59 males and 41 females; excluding Darrang and Kamrup, to which the above explanation chiefly applies, it is 54.5 men to 45.5 women."

In the census report on Assam for 1891, E. A. Gait, saying that Assam is surrounded by Buddhist countries, thinks "that there is reason to believe that at some previous period the inhabitants of Assam itself were also followers of Sakya Muni. At the present day, however, the only Buddhists are recent settlers from the Shan country, or Bhutias who have come down to trade. The indigenous inhabitants of the province have forsaken Buddhism for Hinduism."

Speaking about the distribution of Buddhists districtwise, he adds, "The great majority are found in Lakhimpur, where they are Shans—Khamtis, Phakials, &c. There is a slight falling off as compared with 1881, which is explained by the fact that the Singphos, who are mostly animistic, were then shown under this head. The Buddhists of Sibsagar and Naga Hills are also of Shan origin,—Turungs, Aitonias, and the like. Most of those censused in Kamrup and Darrang are Bhutias, who visit the plains during the cold weather for purposes of trade. The Buddhists of Goalpara and the Garo Hills are the descendants of the Shan auxiliaries who accompanied the Burmese in their invasion of Assam in 1824-26, some of whom settled in the province after their defeat by British troops. Excluding Shans and Bhutias, I find returned as Buddhists a few Chinese, Mughs, and Burmese, some Singphos and Doaniyas, and also some residents of Nipal, Limbus, Thapas, &c."

About the state of Buddhism and Buddhistic knowledge Gait remarks, "Owing to their isolation, the Buddhists of Assam know very little of the real tenets of the religion which they profess. The inhabitants of the small settlements in Goalpara and the Garo Hills have almost entirely forgotten their old belief, although they still assert that they are disciples of 'Godma' (Gautama). Those in the Naga Hills and Sibsagar are also backward, but still have their priests and sacred books. The Khamtis are somewhat more advanced and with them Buddhism has more meaning and vitality."

About the date of the conversion of the Shāns he says, "They themselves assert that it took place B.C. 324, while the Burmese say that it occurred in 1556 A.D., when most of the Shān States become tributary to the Emperor of Pegu. The Ahoms who are the chief Shan tribe in the province, were never Buddhists, and as they came to Assam in 1228 A. D., it is clear that the conversion of their neighbours who subsequently immigrated must have taken place after that date."

The Buddhist tribes of the north-east number like this : the Khāmṭi 3,040, Phākiyāl 565, Turuṅg 301, Narā and Khāmjāng 35 ; there being, moreover, others like the Āitanīyā, and other Shāns. Then Bhuṭīyās numbered 1,503.

The census of 1901 shows a total population of 6,126,343 for Assam including Manipur, out of which 8,911 are Buddhists. Without Manipur the total is 5,841,878 and Buddhists are 8,766. Among the districts the highest number of Buddhists is 4,572 for Lakhimpur and the next is 1,668 for Sibsāgar. Kāmrūp and Goālpārā show 811 and 346 respectively.

The *Assam District Gazetteers* throw some light on the state of Buddhism in Assam, particularly as found in the censuses of 1901 and earlier. The Gazetteer for Lakhimpur (Calcutta, 1905), speaking about the 4,572 Buddhists returned in 1901, has this to say about the Buddhist villages and bāpucaṅg or vihāra:

"The Buddhists of Lakhimpur are not, as in most of the other districts of Assam, merely Bhutias, Nepalese, and other temporary immigrants. Most of them are Khamtis, Singphos, or Phakials ; people, who have emigrated from Bor Khamti, the Hukong Valley, and the Shan States, and have settled in Assam. In the Phakial village on the Dihing river near Margherita, there is a regular Buddhist monastery. The building like the other houses in the village, is raised upon stout posts, well out of reach of flood, and consists of one large room with several smaller chambers leading out of it, while from the centre of the roof rises a curious pagoda-like erection. At one side of the main hall is a raised dais, adorned with curious pictures representing the tortures of the damned. To the mild Buddhist artist, to whom all life is sacred, this subject proves as fascinating as to the medieval priest. The unfortunate sinners are represented as being chased and torn by dogs, and speared by the evil spirits who accompany them, as being slowly crushed between rocks till blood oozes from their mouths and noses, and as being hurled into lakes of fire. Others are to be seen struggling in the thorny cane brake, or with cords around their necks being strangled and otherwise mutilated by evil looking demons. At the back of the dais there is an altar on which stand some twenty gilded images of Buddha, the largest being as much as two or three feet high. But the most curious things about this place, right on the frontier of a frontier district, is the strange mixture of east and west. Before the altar stands a camp table, save the mark on which are placed quaint specimens of Burmese lacquerware, intermixed with flower vases of a shape and pattern which sometimes disfigure a third class seaside lodging house in England. On the floor around the Buddhas are to be seen almirahs with glass doors, looking glasses that are usually reserved for the bed-room of the dak-bungalows, cheap American clocks, and other of the more hideous products of western civilization. The monks themselves have come from Burma, and, as in Burma, teach the village boys to read and write. The complicated Burmese character is laboriously inscribed on wooden boards smeared with charcoal, with pens that, like the teachers, have come from the neighbourhood of Moulmein. The Phakials themselves live in houses on piles, which are thatched with tokow leaves, (*livistonia jenkinsonia*) in place of grass. In the front verandah stands the loom on which the women weave cloths of a curiously complicated tartan. A part of the inner room is divided into tiny cubicles, and the Phakial sense of modesty is evidently more developed than is usual in Assam. More than half of the Buddhists enumerated in the district were Singphos and Khamtis, and a considerable number of the Nepalese professed themselves followers of this religion."

The Sibsagar Gazetteer (Allahabad, 1906), speaking about the 1,668 Buddhist souls as in the 1901 census, only remarks that they are "immigrants from the Shan States, who settled in Asham at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries and are locally known as Noras, Turungs and Aitoneas."

The other districts of Assam had extremely sparse Buddhist population, Sylhet, for example, having only 7 in 1901. The Gazetteer for Kamrup (Allahabad, 1905) provides the picture of a Bhutanese Buddhist village that would be found interesting :

"Most of the Buddhists are either Bhutia traders who visit the plains in the cold weather, or Nepalese sawyers and herdsmen. There is, however, one Bhutia and Buddhist village within British territory, the Dewangiri, to which reference has been already made in the preceding chapter. The village stands about 1,800 feet above the level of the sea on one of the outer ranges of the Bhutan Hills. The path to it lies up the Darranga river, and, as the gorge is full of boulders, it is a somewhat trying march of from three to three and a half hours' duration from Darranga camp. The village is built on a saddle from which there is a fine view to the south over the Kamrup plain, while to the north there are ranges of forest clad mountains and the gorge of the Pagladiya. Along the ridge stand twenty tall masts, each some forty feet in height. A narrow strip of cloth, printed with Buddhist prayers, is fastened along the whole length of each mast, and cracks sharply in the wind that comes roaring up the gorge and across the ridge. In the centre of this row of masts is a curious urn-shaped cairn, nearly twenty feet in height, that has recently been erected in Buddha's honour. The houses are small uncomfortable dwellings built on piles, with floors of wood, roof of cane and plantain leaves, and walls of split bamboo. There is only one small room, with a little verandha in front and at the rear, and pigs, goats, and poultry scratch about beneath the chang. The whole place is dirty, squalid, and untidy, and, as the bamboo walls are full of holes, the people would suffer much from cold, were it not for the masses of filthy raiment that they were, and the big fireplace in the centre of the little room."[1]

The Gazetteer for Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts (Shillong 1928) informs : "All Khamtis west of the Burma divide, i.e., in Assam, are now ordinary poll-tax paying rayats except their one Chief Raja Chowma Numshaum of Choukham on the Te'eng river, Sadiya Frontier Tract, whose clan have been temporarily exempted. They are a likeable, comparatively advanced people with their own language written in the Burmese script, professing Buddhism. But they were also an opiumsodden people and a dying race, as their numbers show. All the Khamtis in Assam were enumerated in 1921. Of the total number (2,953), 1,460 were in the Sadiya Frontier Tract. Most of the remainder are settled in Lakshimpur, but a few live in the Balipara Frontier Tract and Sibsagar. . . . They live in some twenty small villages varying from a few house to over 50 in the head village of Choukham, and in some cases are intermixed with Singhphos."

The Gazetteer refers to the Sherdukpens, Khāmbās and Mombās (Membās, said to be called Thebengiā Bhuṭiā by the Assamese), and makes the following reference to the now famous Tāwāng gompā : "South of Sela, the Sherchokpas are under the control of two monk Jongpens appointed by the Tawang monastery, a huge monastery of 500 monks, an offshoot of the important Drepung monastery of Lhassa with the exception of the village of Senge Dzong which is under the Tsona Jongpens." About the Membās, the Gazetteer adds : "The Membas are Buddhists and in most of their villages is a Gompa (temple) and to judge from outward signs they should be good Buddhists for on every corner of the road one finds a 'Mane' wall or Chorten and in the neighbourhood of each village every stream is used to turn a huge prayer wheel. Their Buddhism, however, is superficial ; in the few villages that have priests these have succumbed to the world, the flesh and the devil and taken unto themselves wives thus *ipso facto* renouncing their holy orders. They, however, continue to perform their office though they have long lost the respect of their flocks."

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[1] Dalton (1884) gives a description of the temple which he visited in 1849 : "It is a square stone building with gable ends and a thatched projecting roof under the gable facing the north ; there is a projecting balcony in front of a large bay window which lights a recess at the opposite end of the temple containing three large Buddhist images, all seated in the usual crosslegged attitude of absorbed contemplation. They appeared to be formed of clay, and were exceedingly well executed and resplendent with gilding. The apartment about 20 feet square, is boarded and the walls are entirely covered with paintings of figures in similar penitential and devotional attitudes, but differently dressed. It was said, they were all the work of a native artist, the colours were particularly brilliant and well chosen and the drawing tolerably correct ; gilding was introduced to heighten the effect. A priest's house is also of stone stands near the temple ; it is two storied, and with its projecting roof and balconies has a picturesque effect."

In the census of 1911 the total population of Assam (6 Assam Valley districts, 2 Surma Valley districts, 6 Hill districts and Manipur) was found to be 7,059,857 with 10,513 Buddhists among it (9,791 in the Brahmaputra Valley, 44 in Surma Valley and 678 on the Hills). The report on the census adds : "Over half of the Buddists were censused in Lakhimpur and about one-fifth in Sibsagar ; in both districts they are old Burmese immigrants, who live near the frontier ; in the rest of the Brahmaputra Valley they are Bhutia traders who had not returned to the hills before the census day ; their number elsewhere is negligible." The report gives the number of people in each Buddhist tribe as follows : Āitanīyā—414, Dowanīyā—1,847, Khāmṭi—1,868, Narā—348, Phākiyāl—506 and Turuṅg—541.

The census of 1921 shows 7,990,246 as the total population of Assam, inclusive of the Assam Valley Division, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Frontier Tracts (Sadiya and Balipara) and the Manipur State. This includes 13,520 Buddhists. The report in the same strain as the previous ones says, "The Buddhists of the province have increased from 10,500 to 13,500 numbering now 17 in every 10,000 of the population. . . They are chiefly found in Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Sadiya Frontier Tracts, in which districts they are descendants of old Burmese immigrants—Aitons, Phakials, Turungs, etc. In other districts there are several hundreds scattered chiefly in the Brahmaputra Valley and Lushai Hills. There are Bhutiya traders, Nepali immigrants, and Magh cooks from the Chittagong coast. Most of the Nepalis, however, returned the resolves as Hindus. In the Lushai Hills and Manipur the Buddhists (over 1,000) are more recent immigrants from Burma. The increase of Buddhists is due partly to natural growth, partly to some Khamti villages on Sadiya Frontier being newly censused, and partly to immigration. There is one Buddhist monastery."

According to the census of 1931, Assam, comprising the Assam Valley Division, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Sadiya Frontier Tract and Balipara Frontier Tract had a total population of 8,622,251. The Buddhists in these four divisions numbered 11,098, 1,152, 2,551 and 154 respectively thus making a total of 15,045. The Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts show 2,613 and 5,645 ; Lushai Hills had 974 Buddhists in this census. The Assam States (Manipur and Khasi) with a total population of 445,606 and 180,000 had 61 and 29 Buddhists.

The Khamti Buddhists show a total of 3,644 (1,680 in Lakhimpur, 1,883 in the Sadiya Frontier Tract, and 102 elsewhere) and the Singpho Buddhists have a total of 1,553. In the tea-gardens of Assam there was a total of 682 Buddhists.

The 1951 census of India shows 22,675 Buddhists out of the total population of 9,043,707 for the whole of Assam. The seven Plains Division Districts had 7,571 Buddhists out of a total of 7,805,55, Sibsagar having 3,235 and Lakhimpur 3,179. The ten Hills Division districts with a total population of 1,238,149 had 15,104 Buddhists, the highest number (10,023), being in the Lushai Hills, the Mishimi Hills, the Abor Hills, the Tirap Frontier Tract and the Balipara Frontier Tract having 425 ; 34 ; 1,649 and 12 Buddhist souls respectively.

Burmese and Tibetan Buddhism

The earliest existence of Buddhism in Burma is generally referred to the evangelisation of two monks, Soṇa and Uttara Theras in Suvaṇṇabhūmi under orders from Priyadarśī Aśoka. But this piece of information found in Ceylonese sources is not without doubt. We are, however, definite that Theravāda Buddhism has been in affluent existence in Burma particularly in the kingdom of the Pyus with its capital, Śrīkṣetra (modern Hmawza), near Prome. Sanskrit Buddhism, i.e., Sarvāstivāda also seems to have entered Burma, as also Mahāyānist and tantric texts were preserved in an Upper Burma monastic library as late as 1442 A.D. Pegu (Haṁsavatī), Thaton (Sudhammavatī) and other places soon became centres of Theravāda. In the 11th century A.D. Anawartha (Aniruddha) who ascended the throne of Pagan in 1044, became a pure Theravādin through a Talaing monk from Thaton and invaded Manuha, the king of Thaton, and captured the region. But he accepted the Theravāda culture of the vanquished. "Ridden with primitive heathenism and a very base sort of what has been identified as Mahāyānist Tantrikism, imported from Tibet, Bengal and Assam, Pagan found in the Theravāda, the new religion introduced from the land of the Talaings, a purer and simpler faith, a religion with a more direct appeal and a fresh message of deliverance" (Ray, p. 254). Anawartha built up numerous pagodas and vihāras. This was done by later monarchs also.

As India had already given up its Theravāda, Burmese Buddhists looked up to Ceylon with its Mahāvihāra for inspiration. This led to the formation (1181-82) of the Singhalese fraternity, Sīhala Saṅgha, and a consequent faction between the old Order, Maramma Saṅgha, and the new. Victory, however, came to the latter after a struggle for three centuries. There were, of course, factions among the Simhalese Order itself ; and particularly in vinaya matters some sort of unification was to be attained through the efforts of Dhammaceti, the king of Pegu from the year 1472. The patronage of royal authority was responsible for the promotion of the Simhalese ideals. "The triumph of the Sihala Samgha was indeed the triumph of the Mahavihara tradition that stood for orthodoxy ; and this orthodoxy by which is meant strict conformity to the rules of the Vinaya according to orthodox interpretation was over the character and ideal of the religion in Burma" (Ray, pp. 255-f).

The 16th and 17th century Burmese kings, however, alternated their patronage to Buddhism with tyranny and vandalism, until at last the Saṅgha came to a sad plight of faction and disintegration towards the end of the latter century. Questions over discipline as set forth by the Buddha raged throughout the 18th centruy. Things came to order with the formation of the Burma Saṁgha (Burmese School) in the early years of the 19th century, which came to be looked with reverence even by Ceylon. It was in 1885 that the British occupied Mandalay. Even prior to that Burma had been in contact with Assam since the Āhom king's viceroy at Gauhati approached the Burma king for help against the domineering rule of the Prime Minister, Pūrṇānanda Burāgohāin. After the dismemberment of the Kingdom of Pong by Alomphra of Burma about the middle of the 18th century, some Shan tribes in Upper Burma had already crossed the easternmost part of the Assam range of mountains to the valley of the Brahmaputra, bringing their Buddhism as also some of the old customs with them, while some of them seem to have been evangelised after their arrival in Assam. The Burmese invasions and occupation of Assam between the years 1816 and 1826 have left some small pockets of Burmese Buddhists in the State. All these people look up to Burma for inspiration and guidance when and where possible.

It is learnt from Tibetan sources that the first attempts of Indian Buddhism to enter Tibet were made about the 5h century A.D. when Tho-tho-ri was on the throne. But this country came into the Buddhist world only with its energetic and warlike king, Sroṅ-btsan-sgam-po (born in 617 and died in 650 A.D.), who married two Buddhist princesses, Bhrūkuṭi, daughter of the Nepal king Aṁśuvarman, in 639 A.D. and Wench'eng, daughter of the T'ang Emperor T'aitsung of China two years later. He resolved to introduce Buddhism and find a script for the Tibetan tongue so long without one. Thon-mi Sam-bhota, deputed for study in South India along with a few others, invented the Tibetan script, being only a reproduction of the then norh Indian character with changes to suit Tibetan phonemes. He also translated into this new script several small Buddhist works. The king also had few Buddhist tracts done into Tibetan, built the famous temples of Ramoche and Jokhang in Lhassa and other places to enshrine the images like those of Akṣobhya Buddha, Maitreya, Tārā, Śākya-muni, brought in by his Chinese and Nepali queens. He, of course, built no vihāras. He was later canonized as Avalokitésvara and the queens as Avalokita's consort, Tārā.

But Buddhism thus introduced under happy auspices had to wield an unceasing war against the old animistic and devil-dancing or Shamanist religion, the Bön or Phön. It often suffered set-backs, and had also to make compromises. It came to be recognised once again as a State religion in the reign of Thi-Sroṅ Detsan or Khri-sroṅ-lde-btsan (755-97 A.D.). He invited Professor Śāntarakṣita from Nalanda University, who having mighty difficulties in preaching against the well-pitted animism and superstitions, recommended and had brought to Tibet in 747 A.D. by royal orders St. Padmasambhava, a powerful apostle of tantrism from Urgyan or Udyāna in the Swat Valley to the north-west of Kashmir. Padmasambhava was to be the father of Lāmaism, as Tibetan Buddhism came to be termed by English writers from *lā-ma* (Superior One, =*uttara*), and came to be known as the teacher *par excellence,* Guru Rin-po-ch'e (the precious guru). A man from a land known for sorcery, exorcism and magic, Padmasambhava easily pandered to public taste, belief and customs in Tibet. Within two years of his arrival he built the first Tibetan monastery at Bsam-yas with Śāntarakṣita as its first abbot. "Primitive Lāmaism may, therefore, be defined as a priestly mixture of Ṣivaite mysticism, magic, and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahāyāna Buddhism. And to the present-day Lāmaism still retain this character" (Waddell, p. 30). King Khri-sroṅ-Ide-btsan ordered the preparation of the first catalogue of translated Buddhist works. He was also responsible for the reorganisation of the translation activities started by Ṣāntarakṣita. But his Buddhism continued to face opposition from traditionalists and Chinese Mahāyāna teachers.

Ral-pa-chen (816-838 A.D.) was another great king to have strongly upheld Tibetan Buddhism. But he was murdered and his elder brother, Glan-dar-ma, came to the throne as an enemy of Buddhism. Buddhism was ruthlessly suppressed. This heretic king was murdered by a monk in 841 A.D., and the banished priests returned to central Tibet and became very powerful, assuming the regency during the minority of the Glan-dar-ma's sons. Tibetan monarchy weakened, and the country was divided into small principalities. The Lāmaist church grew in size and influence until at last Atīśa or Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna (982-1054 A.D.) arrived in Tibet in 1038 from the Vikramaśīlā vihāra and began his reformation of Lāmaism. The Old School (Rñin-ma-pa), heterogenous and unreformed, marked by the red cap of the adherents, worship Padmasambhava as their guru. Atīśa based his reformed teachings on the Yogācāra tradition of Maitreya and Asaṅga. His Tibetan disciple, Hbrom-ston, established the Bkaḥ-gdamsa-pa school with its synthetic view of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, its favour for ascetic life and disfavour of magic practices. Later in the 14th century the great Tibetan reformer, Tsoṅ-kha-pa, purified this school of much of its elaborate ritualism and founded the Dge-lugs-pa school which, marked by yellow hats, has been dominating Tibetan Buddhism through the theocratic authority of the Dalai Lāmas, coming to power in 1650 when the fifth in their succession obtained Tibet as a gift from the Mongol prince, Gusri Khan, who conquered the country for him.

The people in the Assam plain and the hills lying along its northern border have been maintaining steady trade contact with Tibet. The Tibetan traders entered the lower lands through different routes which opened on the duwārs, 'doors' or passes like Bijni and Chapāguri in the present Kamrup district and Burigomā in the Darrang. Hamilton writes about the trade between Assam and Tibet, "At a place called Chouna, two months' journey from Lassa, on the confines of the two States, there is a mart established, and on the Assam side there is a similar mart at Geegunshur, distant four miles from Chouna. An armed caravan repairs from Lassa to Chouna, conducted by about 20 persons, conveying silver bullion of about one lakh of rupees, and a considerable quantity of rock salt for sale to the Assam merchants at Geegunshur, to which place the latter bring rice, which is imported into Thibet from Assam in large quantities ; Tussa cloth, a kind of coarse silk cloth, manufactured by the Native women in Assam from the queen downwards, iron and lac found in Assam, and other skins, buffalo horns, pearls, and corals, first imported from Bengal." The import from Tibet consisted of woollen goods, gold dust, salt, musk, horses, chowries and Chinese silk. In the fairs like the one at Udalguri gathered merchants from Lhassa dressed and looking like the Chinese. From very early days thus the northern Assam got her Lāmaism, which still continues among the Sherdukpens, Monpās, Membās and Khāmbās, besides the allied Bhuṭīyās who live along the border.

The Buddhist Tribes of Assam

1. **The Khamtis :** The last waves of the Shāns spread into Assam when the Shān empire of Pong, which touched Tipperah, Yuana and Siam, was finally broken up by Alomphrā, king of Burma, about the middle of the 18th century. The group of Shāns, numbering about 5,000, known as Khāmṭi, emigrated to this part of India from Bar-khāmṭi, Muṅg-khāmṭi-loṅg or Mānchi, situated high on the Irawady which, according to them they occupied for many centuries. They made their first settlements in Assam on the Teṅgāpānī river, south of Sadiyā, with the permission of the then ruling Āhoms. But during the reign of Gaurīnāthasiṁha (1780-90) they succeeded in ousting the Āhom warden of the Sadiyā outpost and arrogating to their chief the title of Sadiyā-khowā Gohāin in 1794 A.D. The Āhoms and later the British, who took the country, had to recognise that office as such. In 1835 there was an immigration of 230 Moonglary Khāmṭis. In 1839 the Khāmṭis stormed the British garrison at Sadiyā and killed Colonel White. Eventually the rebels were defeated and scattered, some khāmṭis returning to Bar-khāmṭi in 1840. Those who stayed were divided into four parties and settled in different parts of the Lakhimpur district—Chunporā, Saikhowāghāṭ, Dāmādāji and Nārāyaṇpur. There are no Khāmṭis at the first place now.

The Khāmṭis profess a pure variety of Buddhism after the Burmese church. As early as 1841 William Robinson noted that "their customs appear precisely the same as those of Ava." They have even been maintaining good contact with the latter country, ever refreshing their knowledge

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of the Buddhist lore and law through the contact of their bāpus (which appears to be an Assamese word, originally meaning father or holy father) or priests (thera and bhikkhu) with Burmese phongyis. The bāpus, as Dalton notes, are "well versed in the recondite mysteries of their religion." They are, moreover, good educators and that is why a large portion of the laity (except only the slaves) can read and write their own language and also Burmese in a sort of modification of the Burmese script. The census report of 1881, however, states: "The doctrines of their religion are contained in sacred books written in the Khamti character, but believed in some cases to be of the Pali language. They have not, however, any very definite notion of the religion they profess." This complaint is rather curious.

The bāpus follow the vinaya in the matters of food and general conduct, but for the laity the taking of fish and animal food is no offence. Anybody can aspire to be a bāpu, provided he is prepared to live a life of celibacy and rigour according to the vinaya. The bāpus are ranked very high in society; they have been honoured even more than the Gohāins or chiefs. They, in fact, control the social life of the people. Whenever a holy performance is to be there, they fix the date by a process of divination. It is the responsibility of society to maintain the bāpus. As Dalton (1872) says, "Every morning the priests move quickly through the villages preceded by a boy with a little bell, each holding a lacquered box in which he receives the offerings of the people, generally presented by the women, who stand waiting at the door with a portion of their ready cooked food." Cooper (1873) has noted it that the bāpus receive their appointment from the Buddhist Church of Burma. The office is not hereditary. The priests have shaven heads, put on amber-coloured garments, and carry rosaries.

The bāpucāṅgs, like the houses of the richer Khāmṭis, are of timber and thatch, but they are carved elaborately. There are a remarkable neatness and a fine taste in the arrangement of the interior. In the outward form of the bāpucāṅgs there is an attempt at the appearance of a Burmese pagoda. I had the occasion to visit the vihāra in the principal Khāmṭi village, Chaukhām. It is beautifully and strongly built of timber, and is covered with corrugated iron sheets. On the pedestal at the centre is a number of Buddhas, which are specimens of Burmese and South-East Asian sculpture. There are a number of printed paintings, the series depicting the tales of jātakas like those of Vessantara and Bhūridatta with legends in the Thāi language particularly attracting one's attention.

The bāpus are generally fine craftsmen. They carve on wood, bone or ivory. Ivory handles of dāos and other weapons with twisted snakes and dragons in relief were their forte.

Dalton gives an account of the religious festivals of the Khāmṭis in these words: "The Khamtis have also two great festivals in the year,—one to celebrate the birth, the other to mourn the death, of Gautama. At these ceremonies boys dressed up as girls go through posture dances, for which, I believe, Burmese women are celebrated, and at the anniversary of the saint's death the postures are supposed to be expressive of frantic grief; but as a more distinct commemoration of the birth, a lively representation of an accouchement is acted. One of the boy-girls is put to bed and waited on by the others. Presently something like infantile cries are heard, and from beneath the dress of the invalid a young puppy dog is produced squeaking, and carried away and bathed, and treated as a new-born babe."

The Khāmṭis have other festivals also round the year, one known as *pāicāmken* being held at the time of the bahāg bihu festival of the Assamese, when the buddhas in a bāpucāṅg are taken out to the open and sprayed with water. Like the Monpā and other Buddhists of the extreme north-west of the N.E.F.A., the Khāmṭis have their religious dances. Three things generally strike the onlooker of these dances—the use of animal motifs, the use of masks and the striking similarity of the steps, the entrance and exit parts of these dances with the bhāonā dances of the Assamese Vaiṣṇavas. The music is simple, provided with the help of a gong, a small pair of cymbals and an ordinary drum beaten with a stick. The subject-matter is taken from the Buddhist lore. One's heart is touched with compassion to witness a dance sequence, in which the first stage consisted of cruelty and fighting in the animal kingdom prior to the advent of Bodhisattva and the second stage the quiescence all over the world with the descent of the Buddha.

The social behaviour of the Khāmṭis is very fine, and is controlled by a reverence to the bāpus and nāmcuns (chiefs). Like some neighbouring hill tribes the Khāmṭis have their ḍekā-cāṅg (dormitory for bachelors of the village) and gābharu-cāṅg (dormitory for the unmarried young women, in the charge of an elderly lady), which encouraged courtship to a small degree. The clean burial grounds, with mounds raised over the honoured dead, is a striking feature of a Khāmṭi village.

2. **The Singphos:** The Singphos, living in the Tirāp and Lohit Frontier Divisions of the N.E.F.A., number at present about 2,500. According to Col. S. F. Hannay the Singphos are the same people as the Kākus or Kākhyens (the Cacobee of the ancient maps) living on the eastern branches of the Irawady in Burma. 'Kakhyen' is the same as 'Karen', which means 'aboriginal'. They extended east to the confines of Yunan, and west to the valley of the Kyendwyen; but it was only on spreading into the valley of Assam that they assumed the name of Singpho, which in their own language means 'man'" (Dalton, p. 10). They "repudiate all affinity with the Shans, and are not considered by ethnologists to be connected with these except very remotely. Their language is entirely different, approximating more to the Karen, Manipuri, Burmese, Kuki, Naga and Abor dialects, and their religion is a rude paganism, whilst the Shans are most of them Buddhists" (p. 12). When the northern Shān empire broke down, the Kākhyens began

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invading others' territories and occupying the region between easternmost Assam and Bhutan. They made their first appearance in the valley of the Brahmaputra during the "intestinal commotion" in Assam when the Māyā-marīyā sect of Vaiṣṇavas rose in revolt against the Āhom king, Gaurīnātha-siṁha, about 1793 A.D. They first settled on the Teṅgā-pānī river east of Sadiyā and in the Nāmrūp tract on the Burī-Dihing. They met with no opposition from the local people, but were rather well received by them as a sort of guarantee against rebellious forces. They settled down into villages under the Daphā, the Bisā, the Lātorā, the Lātāo and other powerful gāms or chiefs. There came more unsettled times in the region when the Burmese attacked and then for a time occupied Assam. The Siṅgphos captured the Assamese by hundreds and kept them as slaves. When the British occupied the country, one officer, Captain Neufville, alone released no fewer than 6,000 such slaves.

The Siṅgphos are Buddhists by courtesy. Buddhism among the Siṅgphos is absolutely of a nominal nature although there have been bāpus and bāpucāṅgs in the big villages. Having no regular priesthood amongst them, they hold the phongyis in great reverence. They do not have any clear notion of a Supreme Being. They worship these chief nhāts or malignant spirits—the Mu Nhāt or spirit above, the Ga Nhāt or spirit below, and the household Nhāt. To the Nhāts they sacrifice fowls, pigs and dogs. When out on an important expedition against foes they used to offer buffaloes, and the gāms took the flesh as a pledge of unity among them. They have a process of divination amongst them, in which the village tumsāwā burns a piece of nal reed in order to tell the future. The tumsāwā comes and worships the Shām Nhāt when there is fever in the family. He worships the same spirit on account of one wounded in a fray, and the Pālāt Nhāt when blood oozes out of the wound.

Polygamy prevails amongst the Siṅgphos, and the chiefs used to have many wives, some of them no better than mere attendants. A girl is bought with a price paid to her parents, and the marriage feast completes the ceremony. Adultery is an offence for which the adulterer has to satisfy the aggrieved husband with slaves, buffaloes, daos, beads, etc.

The dead are generally buried, the rich, like those of the Khāmṭis or some of the Āhoms in olden times, having the honour of a mound over their remains. If one meets death by violence, a buffalo has to be sacrificed and its head fastened as a memorial in the centre of "a cross of the St. Andrew's form". In former times, when an important person died, his body was kept for two or more years so that his scattered relations might come to attend the funeral. Even if the body got decomposed, it was placed in a coffin, and brought back to the house, where it remained in state, decked out with all the insignia of rank used during life-time.

3. **The Dowaniyas:** In 1911 the number of Dowanīyās is shown as 1,847 with 30 in the Sibsagar district and 1,544 in Lakhīmpur. They

have been considered "a mixed race, descended from Singphos and their Assamese slaves", the Siṅgphos having kept, as we have already noted, a large number of such slaves, men and women, and even parcelling some of them down to Burma. At present the Dowanīyās live in about ten villages, with about eighty houses in each, round about Margherita and Digboi. It is believed that the name 'Dowanīyā' comes from *dowān,* a jargon, referring to the Siṅgpho language, which the sons of the Assamese women by Siṅgpho fathers spoke after their return to Assamese society. They belong to the different communities of the like Ahom, Kachari, Maran, Miri and Matak.

The Dowanīyās are Buddhists, taking their formal religion from some phongyi in the beginning of the British regime. In the bāpucāṅg or vihāra of each village live the bāpus or monk priests and the attendant monks. Each house in the village has to contribute to the bāpucāṅg two packets of cooked rice and vegetables for the monks. The monks get their training in Pāli and Buddhism from books in Burmese character.

The Dowanīyās celebrate the three bihu festivals, common to the Assamese, coming on the last day of Āśvina, Pauṣa and Caitra. They have also the hucari or the Assamese merry-go-round of the Caitra or bahāg bihu. On the last occasion they take out all the buddhas in the bāpucāṅg to the open, keep them there for three days and spray water on them. The young men and women of the village spray water on each other as in the holi festival.

The Dowanīyās celebrate births in the family on the seventh day, when the bāpus are invited for certain rites. They burn their dead over twenty years and bury the younger. The dead body is kept in the house for two or three days when the bāpus recite maṅgala-sūtras and take their fees. The Dowanīyās can marry more than once. Widow marriage is also admitted. The groom's family has to give to the bride's two buffaloes and an amount of two to five hundred of rupees as price.

4. **The Phakiyals or Tai-phakes :** The Phākiyāls or Phākés belong to the great Tāi race, and are said to have entered Assam from Mungkoṅg about 1760 A.D. immediately after the subjugation of that province by Ālomphrā of Burma. According to Col. Hannay they were near neighbours of the Turuṅg on the banks of the Turuṅgpānī before their immigration. On coming to Assam, they settled on the Burīdihiṅg. They were then taken from there by the Āhoms and settled near Jorhat. When the Burmese invaded Assam, they ordered all Shān tribes to return to Mungkoṅg. As the Phākiyāls proceeded back and reached their first settlement on the Buri-dihing, the province went into British hands so that the Phākiyāls are said to have been 150 houses when they originally immigrated into Assam. As Hannay says, the number was reduced to about 50 houses in 1848. The census reports of 1872 and 1881 did not show them separately, but probably with the Khāmṭis. In 1891 they numbered 565, but in 1911 they are shown

as 506 only. At present the number will be about six hundred divided in about 150 houses in a few villages—Nām-phākiyāl and Ṭipām Phākiyāl near Nāharkaṭīyā, Bar-phākiyāl and Mānmau near Mārgheriṭā and Nanglāi and Laṅg near Ledo.

Each Phākiyāl village has a bāpucāṅg, where several bāpus live. These monks get their daily ration in the morning from each household of the village. They have to learn Burmese, Tāi and Pāli in order to be able to read the Buddhist scriptures. They observe varṣāvāsa from the full-moon day of Āṣāḍha to that of Āśvina, when men, women and children come on the eighth and fifteenth day of the lunar fortnights for initiation to the pañca-śīla and aṣṭa-śīla mantras. Those who have taken the aṣṭaśīla mantra may kill no animls. On the occasion of the bahāg-bihu the buddhas of a vihāra are washed, and the young people wash the hands and feet of the recepients of aṣṭaśīla mantra and take their blessings. The full-moon day of Phālguna is utilised for bonfire and community feasting as is done by the common Assamese folk in the māgh-bihu.

Polygamy is not out of the rule in Phākiyāl society. A widow can marry a second time. The relations of a bride get from seventy to three hundred of rupees as bride-price. The Phākiyāls intermarry with the Khāmṭis, Khāmjāṅgs, Āitanīyās and Turuṅgs. They bury the dead below fifteen years and burn the ones above that age. They keep the dead body for two or three days so that the members of the family can attend the funeral. The rites continue for seven days when feasting goes on in the house.

5. **The Naras, Pani-naras and Khajangs :** Narā is, as Gait says in the census report of Assam, 1891, "the name by which the Mungkong Shans were known to the Ahoms, the frequent references are made to them under the name in Ahom chronicles. The persons known to us as Khamjangs or Khamyangs, are a section of that race, who formerly resided on the Patkai, but were driven to take refuge in Assam at the beginning of the present century, owing to the oppression of the Singphos. . . . At the census only 36 persons were returned to Khamjangs, but as Hannay says that they are commonly known by the more general term of Nora, or Pani Nora, it is possible that some of the persons so returned are really Khamjangs. It may also be that many of them have now lost their tribal identity, as even in 1848 it was reported that they had much mixed up with the Assamese, and could repeat that language, although at that time they still retained their own language, custom and religion (Buddhism)." In the chronicles known as burañjīs we get occasional references to the Narās' hostilities with the Āhoms as also to the marriages of Āhom kings with Narā princess. It is possible that these relations brought a number of Narā people to Assam each time. The 1911 census shows 348 as the population of a small Narā colony.

Apart from those who have long identified themselves with the Āhoms there are Narās in the Disāṅgpānī, Chalāpathār and other villages in the Sibsagar sub-division. They profess Buddhism and have vihāras in their villages. They can speak Tāi, and learn reading and writing that language and Pāli.

6. **The Turungs:** There are a few Turuṅg villages at Titābar in the Jorhat sub-division and at Barpathār in the Golaghat sub-division. In the 1881 census they were not shown separately; in 1891 they were 301, and in 1911 they numbered 541. The Turuṅgs entered Assam about 1820. According to their tradition they originally lived in Muṅgmāṅg Khāosaṅg on the north-east of Upper Burma and then settled on the Turuṅgpānī and got their present name. They were invited by the Narās, already settled near Jorhat, but as they crossed the Patkoi they were detained as slaves by the Siṅgphos for five years. They were released by Captain Neufville along with other Assamese slaves, after which they settled in the Sibsagar district.

"The Turungs are Buddhists. Their priests are Chanman, the chief, and Gaosang, the ordinary spiritual preceptor. They are, in theory at least, celibates."

Polygamy, though not very usual, is not forbidden among the Turuṅgs. Bride-price, according to Gait, vary from Rs. 40 to Rs. 80. "The marriage ceremony is similar to that prevalent amongst the Āhoms, the main feature being tying the bride and bridegroom together with a cloth." The Turuṅgs profess to intermarry with Narās, Khāmṭis and Siṅgphos. Widows and divorcees are allowed to marry. The Turuṅgs usually burn their dead.

7. **The Aitans or Aitaniyas:** "The Aitons or Aitoneas are said to have been the section of the Shans at Mungkong which supplied eunuchs to the royal seraglio." The census report, 1881, holds. "The Aitonias are of mixed descent, and are said to speak a language compounded of Khamti and Assamese." According to one opinion they entered Assam in the 13th century and becam rulers of the Brahmaputra valley (J. McSwiney, 1911). But most probably they came to Assam after the Khāmṭis from the Upper Chindwin Valley. In 1891 there were two settlements of this tribe, one in the Naga Hills and the other in the Sibsagar district. In the 1911 census they are returned as numbering 414. At present they are to be found in the Barpathār and Sarupathār regions in the Golaghat sub-division.

The Aitanīyās are Buddhists, their priests coming to them from the Khāmṭi villages in Lakhimpur. As early as 1891 Gait notes that gradually they were abandoning their old customs to become bhakats.

8. **Other Shans and the Mans:** The Burmese invasions of Assam between 1816 and 1825 left behind some three or four hundred of Muṅgkoṅg Shān auxiliaries, who are to account for the Shān or Mān population of Kamrup, Goalpara and Garo Hills. But these scattered Buddhists have

almost lost their beliefs. The 1921 census notices that in Lushai Hills and Manipur the Buddhists (over 1,000) were of recent coming from Burma. In the Garo Hills there is still a Mān village at Phulbari.

9. **The Bhutiyas:** The census of 1881 showed a Bhuṭīyā population of 1,340 in Assam; the number increased to 1,503 in 1891. These numbers invariably included Bhuṭīyās who come down from their hills in the cold season for trade mainly in the Daraṅgā (Kamrup) and Udālguri (Darrang) fairs and pilgrimage to the temple of Hayagrīva-Mādhava in Hājo, considered by them to be the shrine of Mahāmuni, that is, the Buddha. Gait notes that already by 1891 there was a decrease in Bhuṭīyā traders as the price of salt, their commercial staple, was getting cheaper in recent years. Another cause of decrease given is that they were no longer in possession of the duwārs (bāṅgcā as they call them) or passes to Assam, thus losing their influence on the Kachārī and other plainsmen. Another thing to be noted is that the census figures include also the N.E.F.A. tribes we are presently to describe. This will be clear when we read Gait's report of 1891 dividing the Bhuṭīyās enumerated into three classes thus: "First, there are the inhabitants of Bhutan, who enter the province at Kherkeria and the different passes west of that point. Secondly, there are the inhabitants of the Towang province subject to Lhassa, a narrow strip of which runs southwards on the eastern boundary of Bhutan and abuts on British territory north of Udalguri in the Mangaldai subdivision. Lastly, there are the Thebengia Bhutias who are practically independent of Lhassa, and occupy a small triangular tract of country, bounded on the North-West by the country of the Akas and on the south by the Darrang district." The third category, which Mackenzie calls the most easternly of Bhutias, is, as we have seen, no other than the Membās; and the second possibly includes the Sherdukpens and Monpās.

The Bhuṭīyās are only nominally Buddhists, mixing up a great deal of animism with their professed belief. The common Bhuṭīyās make offerings of flowers and bits of rags to a host of spirits. Their Lamas, as Gait points, are very ignorant. "The Ghylongs, Lamas, or priests, form a very large proportion of the population. Admission to the priesthood is obtained by permission of the Deb, on payment of a fee. The Lamas are charged with the medical care of the people; but as exorcism is the only system of treatment attempted, assurance in the practitioner, and faith in the patient, are all that is needed. . . . The village Lamas, and the people generally, confine their religious exercises to telling their beads with the constant dreary repetition of the six-syllablic sentence 'Om-Mani-Padmi-Om'. There preparations for a future state seems to consist in the personal or vicarious performance of this rite; hence the praying machines, by which countless repetitions of the sentence are produced" (Dalton, p. 97). "In their religious observances the most remarkable circumstance is the noise with which they are accompained. The instruments used are clarionets, sometimes formed of silver and brass, but generally of wood with reed pipes, horns, shells, cymbals, drums, and gongs" (Robinson, p. 350).

10. **The Sherdukpens:** The Sherdukpens are only about 1,200 souls living mainly in the villages of Rupā, Jigāon and Shergāon in the Kāmeng Frontier Division of the N.E.F.A. According to their own tradition, they originally came from Tibet, and have descended from the third son of an Āhom princes by the Lhassa Chief Be Srotsen Gompo. The Sherdukpens are keen tradesmen, spending the unbearable part of winter in the plains near Chāriduwār. They are gently and dignified in their general behaviour.

The Buddhim of the Sherdukpens has been greatly mixed up with animism, consisting of the worship, through jijis or priests, of a number of spirits and deities, investing different aspects on nature and the land. There are three-storeyed gompās or Buddhist temples at Rupā and Shergāon enshrining images of Konchosum or the Buddha and a number of his disciples in the Tibetan style. There, are, moreover, wall paintings done by Tāwāṇg artists, Tibetan scrolls hung from the walls, libraries and many prayer wheels in the niches of the gompās. The gompā at Rupā is said to have been built over 165 years ago and the other at Shergāon about 35 years back. Both of them are kept by local Lāmas, some with their training in Tāwāng. Beside the temples flutter in the air a number of prayer-flags on tall poles. Both Rupā and Shergāon have elaborately painted holy gates, called kākāliāng, with conventional designs and figures of the Buddha.

A number of stone shrines, known as māne, in the shape of walls with niches holding tables with the inscription, om maṇi padme huṁ, and a lotus design or a buddha. These shrines are supposed to have the power of warding off danger of demons, etc. There is another structure looking like a stūpa and known as chorten where Lāmas lead community praying.

The Sherdukpens have a number of holy festivals—the chākur when the Lāmas chant from the holy books for six days; the khiksābā with offerings of rice, flowers, and fruits and sometimes the sacrifice of goats and fowls, meant to appease forest deities, etc. They have also a number of dances with animal and bird motifs like the yak, deer, pig, eagle, etc., which are connected up with certain local myths. The music is provided with drums, gongs and horns.

Monogamy is the rule among Sherdukpens. Widows can remarry. They bury the dead. They are caste-ridden in that they make a distinction between the Thoṅg or aristocrat and the Chāo, the commoner.

11. **The Monpas:** The Monpās live in the north-western part of the Kāmeng Frontier Division, round about Tāwāng and Dirāngdzong, made famous by the Dālāi Lāma's flight through these places in April 1959 and the Chinese aggression in November 1963.

"Quiet, gentle, friendly, courteous, industrious, good to animals, good to children, you see in the Monpas the influence of the compassionate Lord Buddha on the ordinary man. They may have little theology : they have a great deal of religion. ...... Precedence, a certain gravity and order,manners, the ceremonial of daily life mean a lot to them" (Elwin, A Philosophy for NEFA, p. 10). They make fine carpets, have terraced cultivation, and rear yaks, horses and sheep. They trade with the Sherdukpens, Tibetans and people of the southern plain. A few families have the art of paper making also among them. They, like the Khāmbās, speak a dialect of Tibetan.

The Monpās are Lāma Buddhists and accepted the faith with strong tantric leanings during the reign of the sixth Dālāi Lāma, born at Ojeling in the Monpā country, the imprint of whose feet is still preserved in the Tāwāng monastery. This lamasery is described in eulogistic terms by Elwin : "The great monastery is the heart of Monpā life and culture. Fifteen miles away you can see it standing like a fort on its hill-side. The approach is like something from another world. As you go along, fires are made of aromatic leaves and branches and the smoke rises to purify the atmosphere. You pass through gate after village gate, the roofs of which are finely painted by local artistis with scenes from the life of the Lord Buddha." Elwin even finds "the College Chapel, the Library, the Senior Common Room, the quad" as in Oxford. "The Monpa Lamas are not perhaps very learned, but they have an infinite reverence for literature. There are some 700 books in the Library and their great treasure is the Getompa, three volumes are lettered in gold. ... There used to be a printing-press here, and there are still hundreds of oblong wooden blocks carved with Tibetan characters." The temple contained its colossal image of the All Compassionate, other smaller images and relics of the mother of the sixth Dalai Lama. The Monpās have a good number of dances or dance-dramas like the Thutotdām, with clowns, warriors, birds and animals. These have the musical accompaniment of drummers, trumpeteers and cymbalists.

Polygamy and polyandry are no taboo with the Monpā. The rich dead used to be burnt with incense at a place, known as Thārpocāng, on the Tibetan border. The ordinary dead does not have this honour, but is dismembered into 108 pices, which are thrown into a river.

12-13. **The Membas and the Khambas:** Along the international frontier to the extreme north of the Siang Frontier Division are two small Buddhist tribes, the Membās and the Khāmbās. "They are much poorer, both economically and culturally, than the Monpas, though the essential spirit of their Buddhism is equally strong. The Khambas of the romantic and sacred Yang Sang Chu Valley have maintained their remarkable dances, as have the Membas of Gelling and they are now beginning to rebuild their shrines and temples which had fallen into a deplorable state of dilapidation" (Elwin, pp. 19-f.). Both these tribes like the Monpās drive their trade as far as Kalimpong and even into Tibet, and buy woollens, brocades, cloth for prayer-flags, little prayer-wheels and beads for rosaries.

14. **The Mags:** There has been a sprinkling of Mag population in

Mizoram as shown by early censuses. Lloyd in the 1921 report makes mention of "Magh cooks from the Chittagong district." The Chittagong Hill Tract is peopled by tribes mainly of two classes according to Captain Lewin—the Khyoungtha or children of the river and the Toungtha, children of the hills. The former are of Arracanese origin, immigrants from the south and by religion Buddhists. Dalton (p. 111) notes that half the population of Arakan (3,21,000 in 1851) were Mags, aboriginal inhabitants of the place. A small number of Mags migrated to the southern parts of Assam.

Besides the above tribes, there are scattered about the State other Buddhist people like Nepalis (Limbus and Thāpās), Chinese and Burmese of recent coming.

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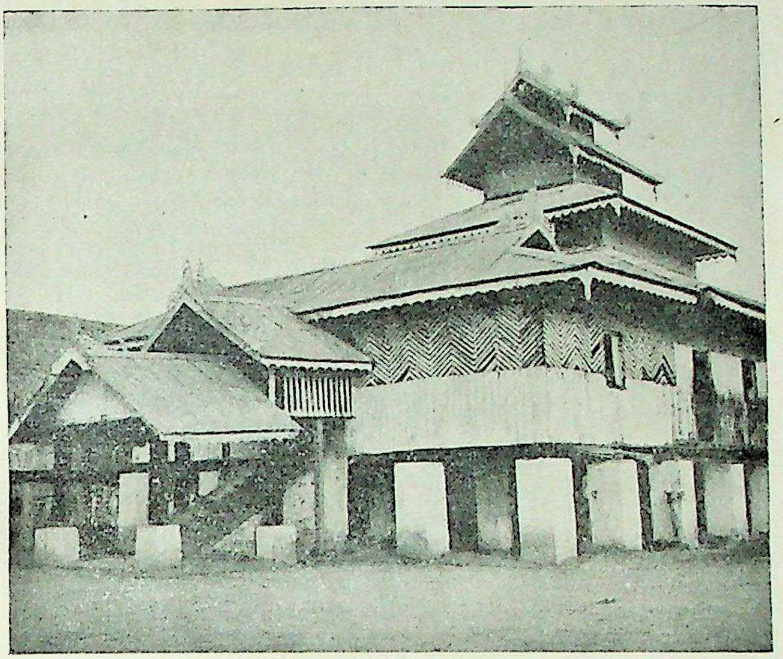
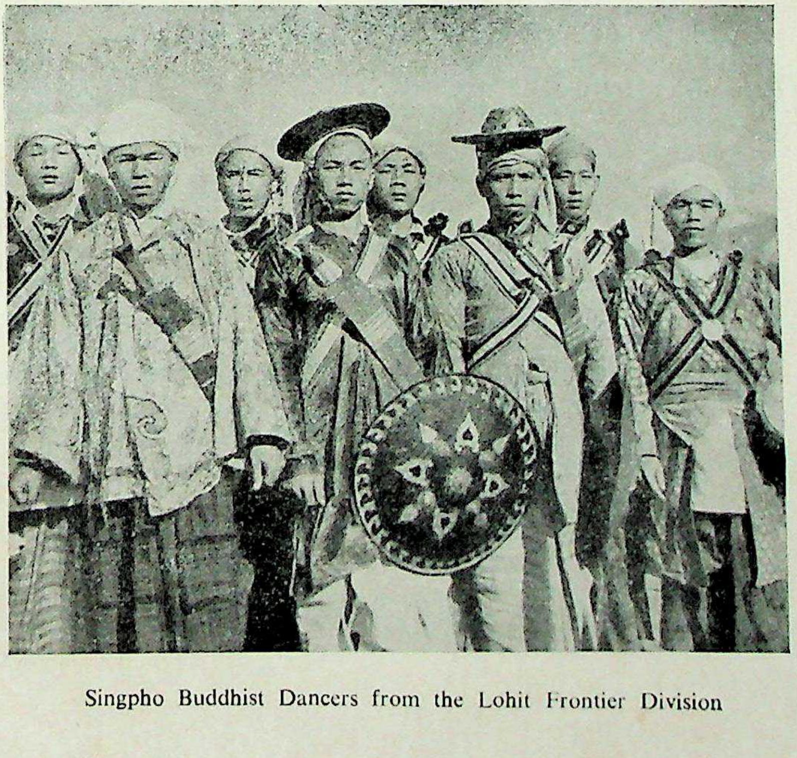
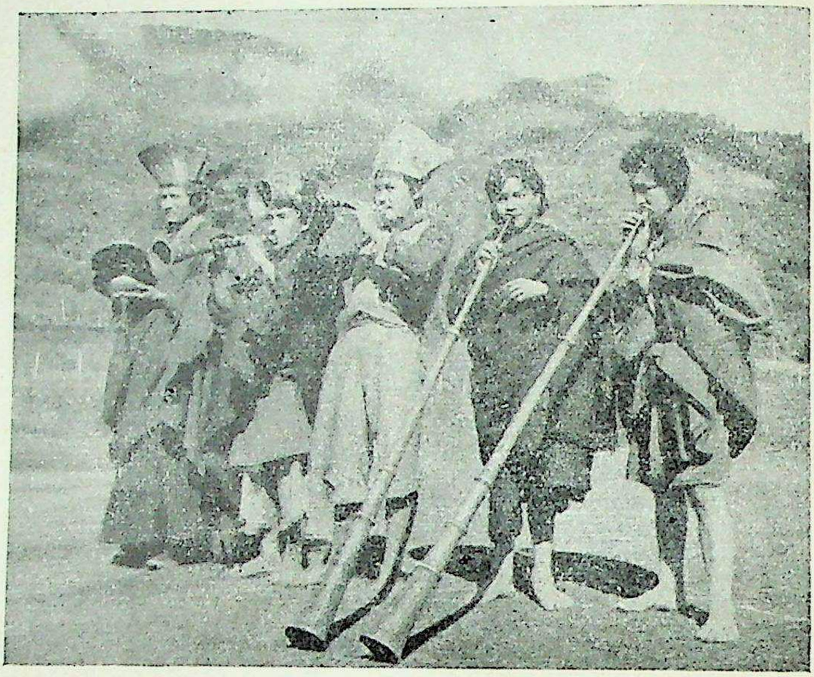


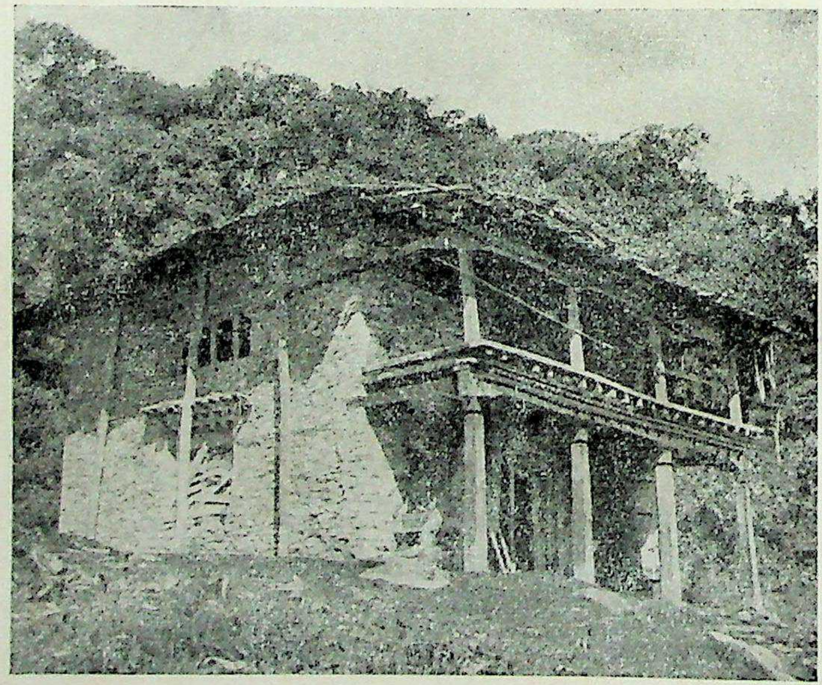
The Khāmṭi Bāpucāṅg at Chaukhām



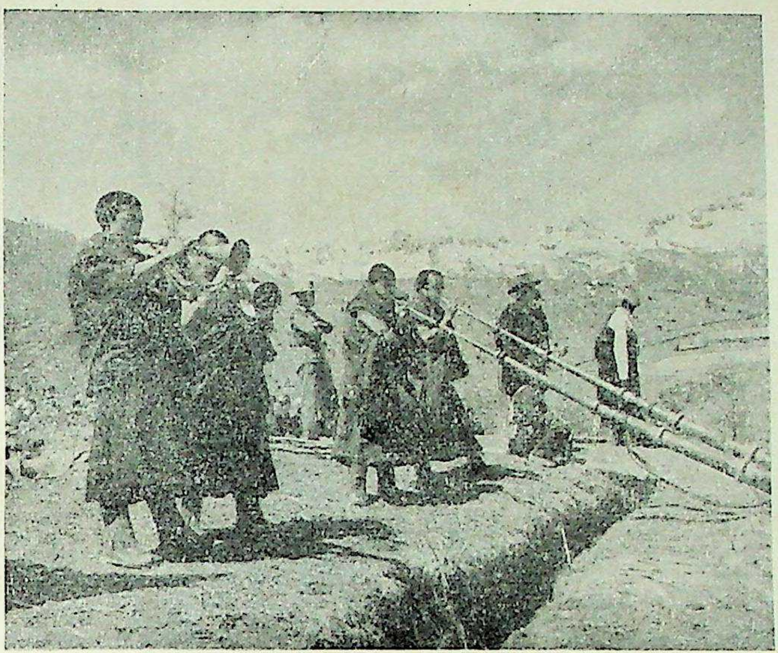
Singpho Buddhist Dancers from the Lohit Frontier Division



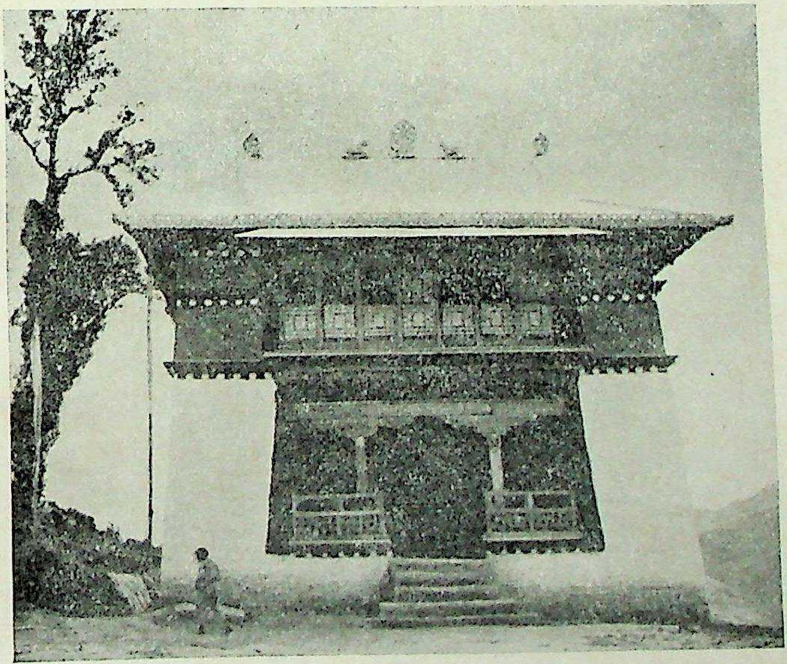
Membā Buddhists from the Siang Frontier Division with their Traditional Musical Instruments



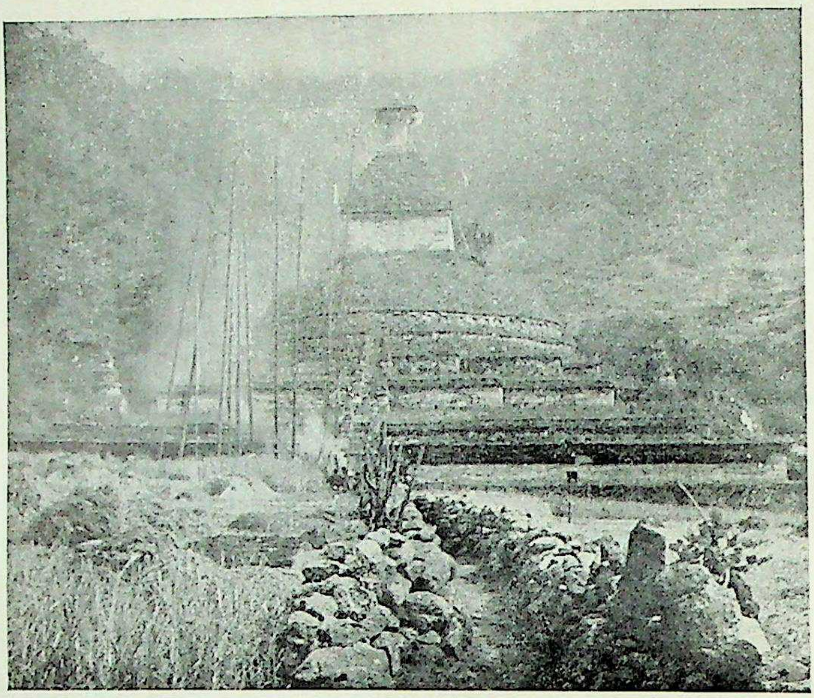
The Buddhist Monastery at Gelling, Siang Frontier Division



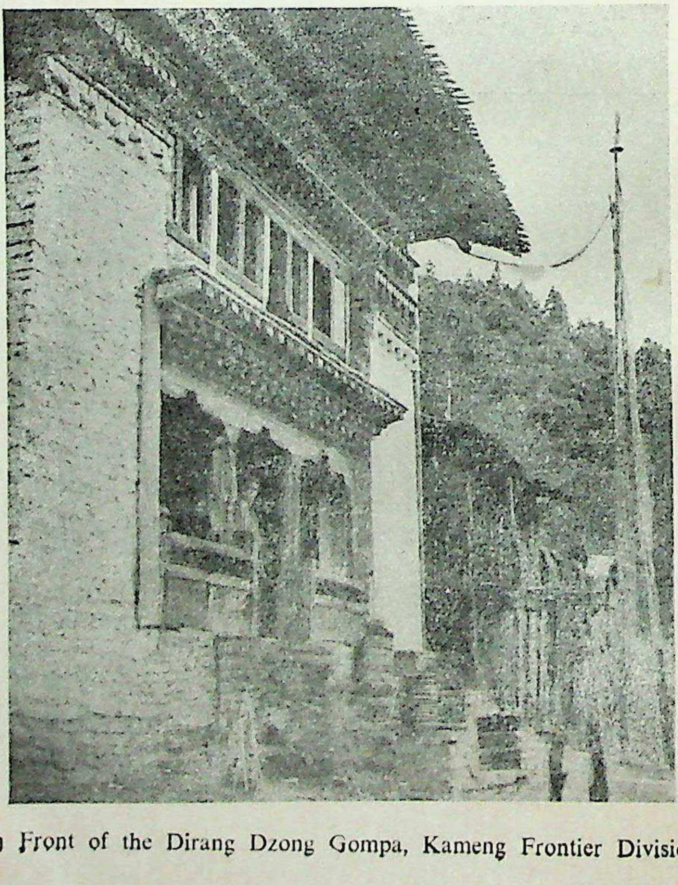
Monpā Lāmas from Tāwāng with their Traditional Musical Instruments



The Gompa at Bomdi La, Kameng Frontier Division



A Buddhist Temple of the Kameng Frontier Division



In Front of the Dirang Dzong Gompa, Kameng Frontier Division

The Abbot of the famous Tāwāng Monastery

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Bāpus of Chaukhām in front of the Bāpucāṅg

State Museum Library
Lucknow

A Bibliography of Writings on Assam Published in Bengali Journals

By

JATINDRA MOHAN BHATTACHARJEE

Assam, the north-eastern frontier of India, is a land inhabited by men of different castes and tribes, creeds and religions. Materials for a complete history of Assam and her people are scattered in various books, pamphlets, papers, correspondences, etc., in various languages. I propose to make here a very modest attempt to catalogue papers on Assam printed in Bengali journals and newspapers. The list, I hope, will be of some help to those who are interested in the study of various aspects of Assam and her people.

Bengal is a province contiguous to Assam. People of other provinces of India can have access to Assam only through Bengal. Historically and geograhically these two sister provinces have had a rather close tie. Among Indian languages Bengali is the language in which writings were published about Assam in a good number. The two languages, namely, Assamese and Bengali, are, moreover, very similar. They come from the same stock, namely, Māgadhī Apabhraṁśa.

In 1301 B.S. (1894 A.D.), the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, the academy of Bengali literature, was started at Calcutta, the nerve-centre of modern Bengal. This pariṣad soon had several branches in and outside Bengal. Of the branches outside Bengal the first was started at Bhāgalpur (Bihār) in 1312 B.S.; the second at Banaras (U.P.) in 1315 B.S.; and the third at Gauhati (Assam) in 1318 B.S. The Gauhati branch of the Pariṣad is running its fifty-fourth year now. Out of the list of Bengali writings on Assam, given below, published in Bengali journals, we find that a good number was read in the monthly or annual sessions of the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad and its different branches. There are some instances where the same article was read on more than one occasion.

In this connection it may be mentioned that in 1315 B.S. a Vaṅga-Sāhityānuśīlanī Sabhā was started at Gauhati. One of the aims and objects of that society was to give impetus to research and to writing on different aspects of Assam in the Bengali language, so that people of the neighbouring Bengal might know the real history of Assam in its various branches. This society drew the sympathy of several Assamese scholars also, like Hemchandra Goswami, Mahamahopadhyaya Dhīreswar Bhattacharjya Kaviratna and others. Some such Assamese scholars became members of the society, and they wrote a number of essays on Assam in Bengali and read them in its sittings. In a meeting of the first year of the Sabha, MM Dhireswar Bhattacharjya discussed the copperplate grant of Valavarmadeva, which was in his possession, and read out the grant and explained its contents to the members present. The grant was also exhibited in that meeting. This inscription was with MM Padmanath Vidyavinod, Professor of Cotton College, Gauhati, for some time. An article on this grant was written by MM Padmanath Bhattacharjya and published in the *Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā,* 1317 B.S., No. 2. This valuable paper, in fact, presents the nucleus of his later monumental work on Assam's ancient history, namely *Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvalī.* This Vaṅga-Sāhityānuśīlanī sabhā of Gauhati merged itself into the Gauhati branch of Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, which was started in 1318 B.S., and got the affiliation of its central body at Calcutta in its meeting of the 10th Kārtika, 1318 B.S. The aims and objects of Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad were *inter alia* the following :—

(1) to collect local geographical information ;

(2) to collect local historical and archaeological materials with photographs of places of pilgrimage, shrines, forts, icons, rock and copperplate inscriptions, etc., with short notes (on each of them) ;

(3) to collect the history of the local religious sects, different tribes with their social customs, religious ceremonies and festivals, etc.

In conformity with the above principles several papers on Assam were published by the members of the Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad and its branches. Some of these were translated into Assamese and published in Assamese journals ; there were also a few Bengali articles, which were translations from Assamese.

Serious study of the Bengali language and literature mainly began with the establishment of Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad in 1301 B.S. With the same object in view, an annual session of the Bengali literary conference was first contemplated by Rabindranath Tagore. After the partition of Bengal, considering that the national language and literature constituted the main factors of national integrity, Rabindranath, the then Vice-president of Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, suggested annual meetings of the Bengali people just in the line of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In a public meeting, which was held in the Calcutta Town Hall in the month of Bhādra, 1312 B.S., Rabindranath read out an article entitled 'Avasthā o vyavasthā' where he first suggested the need of such annual conferences and requested the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad to hold such meetings. When the authrities of the Pariṣad were contemplating to translate Rabindranath's suggestion into action, a request came from Devakumar Roy Chaudhury, the philanthropic and nationalist Zamindar of Lākuṭiā in the district of

Bariśāl, to hold the first annual session of Vaṇga Sāhitya Sammilan at Bariśāl on Vaiśākha 1313 B.S. The Bengal Provincial Conference was to hold its annual session at Bariśāl on the 1st and 2nd of Vaiśākha 1313 B.S. It was presumed that all political and literary men of Bengal would join the provincial conference. So, Devakumar Roy Chaudhury invited all the literary men of Bengal to the conference which was scheduled to be held on the 3rd Vaiśākha in the same pandal. It was also decided that Rabindranath would preside over the conference. It was also notified in clear terms that such a literary conference should not and would not indulge in politics.

In the political history of Bengal of the 19th century, the Bariśāl Provincial Conference is a turning point. What happened in that conference is now a matter of history. The movement for freedom from British bondage got a tremendous impetus from this conference. On the 1st of Vaiśākha the delegates of the conference were subjected to insult and humiliation at the hands of the police. Under orders of the District Magistrate, the conference was declared closed on the 2nd Vaiśākha. Further orders were passed throughout the Bariśāl town banning any sort of meeting. The proposed meeting of Vaṇga Sāhitya Sammilan, as such, could not be held. In the next year, i.e., 1314 B.S., the first session of Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan was held at Kāsimbāzār in the district of Murshidābād, and Rabindranath presided over that conference. A few years after, the annual session of Pravāṣi Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan was started and Rabindranath was also the first president of that conference. Lately the name of this conference has been changed to Nikhil Bhārat Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan. In the year 1315 B.S., an organisation, namely, Uttar Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan was started. This sammilan had its different annual sessions in different towns of North Bengal. In the year 1318 B.S., a session of Uttar Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan was held at Kāmākhyā. This was the fifth session of such annual conferences. Several important research papers on Assam were read out and discussed in the conferences. In the Kāmākhyā session alone, 11 articles about Assam were presented. Some of the writers of these articles were members of Vaṅga Sāhitya Pariṣad, Gauhati Branch.

A list of 142 articles are given below in List A. These articles are arranged alphabetically with (1) serial number, (2) name of the article with an English rendering, (3) name of the writer, (4) name of the journal, (5) the year of publication, (6) pages and (7) remarks, if any. In list B an alphabetical list of writers with reference to the serial number of articles written by them are given. Among the writers of these articles, we find a few Assamese scholars, namely, Amritbhushan Adhikari, Dharmakanta Kavya-Vyakarantirtha, Hemchandra Goswami, Pratapchandra Goswami, Suryyakumar Bhuyan, Taranath Kavyavinod, etc. Cotton College at Gauhati is the premier higher educational institution of Assam. Among the 42 writers of these articles, 5 are from Cotton College, namely Bhubanmohan sen, Padmanath Bhattacharjee, Suryyakumar Bhuyan, Tarakeswar Bhattacharjee and Jatindramohan Bhattacharjee. The articles on Assan were published in Bengali journals—*Bhāratī, Bhārat Mahilā, Navyabhārat, Pradīp, Pratibhā, Raṅgpur Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā, Sāhitya, Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā, Śrīhaṭṭa Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā, Vaṅga-Sāhitya, Vaṅgavāṇī, Vijayā,* etc.

It will be noticed that the list of articles covers a wide range of subjects, namely—ammunition, Buddhism, commerce, copperplate grants, education, ethnology, geography, history, language, literature, notices of Assamese manuscripts, railway scenery, religious groups, rock inscriptions, saints, social custom, temple and deity, travels and wealth of Assam, etc.

In List A the following abbreviations are used:—

A.R.—Annual Report
G.V.S.S.—Gauhati Vaṅga Sāhityānuśīlanī Sabhā
R.—Report
R.S.P.P.—*Raṅgpur Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā*
S.P.—Sāhitya Pariṣad
S.P.P.—*Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā*
S.P.Panj.—*Sāhitya Pariṣad Pañjikā*
S.S.P.P.—*Śrīhaṭṭa Sāhitya Pariṣad Patrikā*
U.V.S.S.—*Uttar Vaṅga Sāhitya Sammilan*
V.S.P.—*Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad,* and
V.S.S.—Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Sammilan.

LIST A

1. adbhuta tāmra-śāsan (A curious copperplate grant), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Haraprasād Saṁvardhan Lekhamālā, 1338 B.S., pp. 164-166.
2. asamīyā bhāṣā (Assamese language), Pareshnath Sen, S. P. Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 94.
3. asamīyā bhāṣā sambandhe kayekṭi kathā (A few remarks on the Assamese language), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., 1317 No. 1 pp. 47-55, read in U.V.S.S., 3rd session Gaurīpur, 1316 B.S., original article was written in Assamese and printed in U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gaurīpur, R.pt. 2, pp. 1-15, and also in Āsām Bāndhav 1316, No. 5, 6.
4. asamīyā grantha vivaraṇ bhūmikā (An account of Assamese books, an introduction), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., 1318 No. 1, pp. 1-8, S.P.Panj., 17 A.R. 1317 B.S., p. 15.
5. asamīyā grantha vivaraṇ (An account of Assamese books), Umeshchandra De, S.P.P., 1319, No. 4, pp. 161-168.
6. asamīyā grantha vivaraṇ (An account of Assamese books), Umeshchandra De, S.P.P., 1321, No. 1, p. 16.

7. asamīyā padmapurāṇa (Assamese version of the Padmapurana), Nishikanta Biswas, read in G.V.S.S., 6th sitting on 17 Āśvina 1316, U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gauripur, R., pt. I, p. 99.
8. asamīyā puthi vivaraṇ (An account of Assamese manuscripts), Umeshchandra De, S.P.Panj. 19 A.R., 1319 B.S., p. 205.
9. asamīyā sāityer ekkhāni pustak—Devajit (Devajit, a book from Assamese literature), Kalikanta Smṛtivedāntatīrtha, S.P.P., 1320 No. 3, pp. 231-236, S.P.Panj., 20 A.R., 1320 B.S., p. 23.
10. asamīyā sāhityer jāgaraṇ o jātiya bhāṣa (An awakening in Assamese literature and national language) Taranath Kavyavinod, S.P.-Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 98, an Assamese version published in Bāhī, 1318 Āṣāḍha, p. 61.
11. āhom ākbar rudrasiṁha (Rudrasiṁha, the Akbar of Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, 4th year, No. 9, 1321 Pauṣa, pp. 345-348.
12. āhom briṭis itihāser kayekṭi kathā (A few remarks on Ahom and British history), Bhubanmohan Sen, S.P.Panj., 33 A.R., 133 B.S., p. 51, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
13. āhom itihāser śeś adhyāya (The last chapter of Āhom history), Sushilkumar Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 36 A.R., 1336 B.S., p. 40, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
14. āhom rājādiger abhiṣekotsav (The coronation ceremony of Āhom kings), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 93, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
15. āṅgāmī nāgā, Surendranath Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 30 A.R., 1330 B.S., p. 41.
16. āsām (Assam), Gopalkrishna De, U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gauripur, R. pt. I, 1317 B.S., p. 91, read in Gauripur session.
17. āsām bhramaṅ (sachitra) (Travels in Assam, illustrated), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1318, No. 3, pp. 181-191, S.P.Panj., 19 A.R., 1319 B.S., p. 54, read in G.V.S.S., 5th sitting on 13th Bhādra, 1316, U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gauripur, R. pt. I, p. 98.
18. āsām bhramaṇ (Travels in Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1320, No. 1, pp. 37-46, S.P.Panj., 20th A.R. 1320 B.S., p. 26.
19. āsām burñjī (A history of Assam), Jatindramohan Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1339 No. 4, pp. 260-261, V.S.P., A.R., 1339 B.S., p. 54.
20. āsām gaurav caritāvalī (Lives of celebrities of Assam), Gopalkrishna De, read in G.V.S.S., 5th sitting, 13th caitra, 1316, U.V.S.S., 3rd session Gauripur, R. pt. I, p. 99.
21. āsām goālpārā eboṅg asamīyā bhāṣā (Assam, Goalpara and the Assamese language), Anandachandra Sen, U.V.S.S., 4th session, Maldah, R. 1318 B.S., p. 28.
22. āsām o āsāmī bhāṣā (Assam and Assamese language), Devanarayan Ghosh, Navyabhārat 1318, Āṣaḍha, p. 169.

23. āsām o bāṅgālī (Assam and the Bengalis), Navyabhārat, 1292, Kārtika, p. 304.
24. āsām o bāṅgālī—prativād (Assam and the Bengalis—a rejoinder), Navyabhārat, 1292, Agrahāyaṇ, p. 377.
25. āsām paryaṭan (Travels in Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1317 No. 1, pp. 41-52.
26. āsām rājyer bāṅgālī guru (Bengali preceptor of Assam state), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, V.S.S. Jessore, 1323 B.S., R. pp. 42-44.
27. āsām rājyer bāṅgālī guru (Bengali preceptor of Assam state), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, 1323, Bhādra, p. 195.
28. āsām relpather kayekṭi dṛśya (A few scenes of the Assam Railway line), Surendranath Majumdar, Saurabh, 1323, Agrahāyaṇ, p. 44.
29. āsāme āhom rājatva (Āhom rule in Assam), Suryyakumar Bhuyan, V.S.P., A.R., 1325 B.S., p. 60.
30. āsāme bauddha dharamābalambī cām jāti (The Cām, Buddhist tribe of Assam), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 25 A.R., 1324 B.S., p. 16, read in S.P. Gauhati branch, 1st Pauṣh, 1325, this article is a Bengali translation of an Assamese article of Kshetradhar Bargohāi, which was read in a meeting of Asamīyā Sāhitya Unnati Sādhinī Sabhā.
31. āsāme prāpta prācīn bhāṣā puthir vivaraṇ (Account of old Assamese manuscripts found in Assam), Tarakeswar Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1327 No. 3, pp. 73-80, S.P.Panj., 27 A.R. 1327 B.S., p. 27.
32. āsāme prāpta prācīn bhāṣā puthir vivaraṇ (Account of old manuscripts found in Assam), Tarakeswar Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1327 No. 4, pp. 129-143, S.P.Panj., 27 A.R. 1327 B.S., p. 60.
33. āsāme prāpta pracīn bhāṣa puthir vivaraṇ (Account of old manuscripts found in Assam), Tarakeswar Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1328 No. 1, pp. 1-14.
34. āsāme prāpta pracīn bhāṣa puthir vivaraṇ (Account of old manuscripts found in Assam), Tarakeswar Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1328 No. 2, pp. 87-90, S.P.Panj., 28 A.R. 1328 B.S., p. 22.
35. āsāme prāpta pracīn bhāṣa puthir vivaraṇ (Account of old manuscripts found in Assam), Tarakeswar Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1329 No. 1, pp. 1-8.
36. āsāme śrī-caitanya (Śrī Caitanaya in Assam), Hemchandra Devogoswami, S.P., 1322 No. 4, pp. 241-248, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
37. āsāme vaṅga bhāṣā (The Bengali language in Assam), Devanarayan Ghosh, Pradip, 1312/Jyaistha, p. 44.
38. āsāme vaṅga sāhityer carcā (Study of Bengali literature in Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Navyabhārat, 1326 Phālguna, 37 Vol., No. 11, pp. 525-530.
39. āsāmer bhūmir bandobasta (Land settlement in Assam), Prabhatchandra Chattopadhyaya, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 93.

40. āsāmer haridās-bhakta nārāyaṇdās ṭhākur (Nārāyaṇdas Thakur, a holy man of Assam), Umeshcandra De, S.P.P., 1319 B.S., read in S.P. Gauhati branch, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R. 1318 B.S., p. 93.

41. āsāmer kalitā jāti (The Kalitā caste in Assam), Pratapchandra Goswami, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 99, read in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā on 25th Caitra, 1318. This article in Assamese was published in the Āsām Bāndhav, p. 90.

42. āsāmer kaṭipaya hindu narapati (A few 'Hindu kings of Assam), Puranchand Nahar, read in V.S.S., 14th session at Naihāṭī, 8th & 9th Āṣaḍha, 1330.

43. āsāmer nānā kathā (About Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1330 No. 3, pp. 87-91, read in 9th monthly sitting on 18th Caitra, Sunday, 1329, S.P.Panj., 29 A.R. 1329 B.S., p. 5.

44. āsāmer patra patrikā (Newspaper and magazines of Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1324 No. 2, pp. 69-90, S.P. Panj., 23 A.R. 1323 B.S., p. 107 and A.R. 1324 B.S., p. 27, read in V.S.P., 23rd year, 10th monthly meeting.

45. āsāmer patra patrikā sambandhe du-ek-ṭi kathā (A few words about newspapers and magazines of Assam), Sushilkumar De, S.P.P., 1324 No. 2, pp. 91-92, S.P.Panj., 24 A.R. 1324 B.S., p. 26.

46. āsāmer rābhā jāti prabhṛiti viṣaye ka-ek-ṭi kathā (A few remarks on the Rābhā and other tribes of Assam), Krishnabihari Roychoudhury, S.S.P.P., 1st year, 3rd No., 1343/Kartika, pp. 80-87.

47. āsāmer sampad (Wealth of Assam), Sureshchandra Bandyopādhyāya, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 99, read in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā, R. p. 91.

48. āsāmer śaṅkaradeva o mādhavadeva (Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva of Assam), Taraprasanna Ghosh, Bhāratī, 1315 Agrahāyaṇa, p. 383.

49. āsāmer śaṅkaradeva o mādhavadeva (Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva of Assam), Taraprasanna Ghosh, Bhāratī, 1315/Pauṣa, p. 408.

50. āsāmer śaṅkaradeva o mādhavadeva (Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva of Assam), Taraprasanna Ghosh, Bhāratī, 1315/Magh, p. 458.

51. āsāmer sudīrgha itihās (The long history of Assam), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.Panj., 17 A.R., 1317 B.S., p. 27, read in U.V.S.S., 4th session, at Maldah on 26th Pauṣa, 1317.

52. āsāmer vaiṣṇava sampradāya (The Vaiṣṇava sect of Assam), Umeshchandra De, R.S.P.P., 1319 No. 4, pp. 178-181, S.P.Panj., 18th A.R. 1318 B.S., p. 99, read in U.V.S.S., 5th session, at Kāmākhyā on 25th Caitra, 1318, R. p. 88.

53. āsāmī bhāṣā (Assamese language), Kaligopal Rudra, Navyabhārat, 1302/Kārtika, p. 346.

54. āsāmī kāmān sacitra (Assamese cannon, illustrated), Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyaya, R.S.P.P., 1317 No. 2, pp. 82-89, S.P.Panj., 17 A.R. 1317 B.S., p. 15.
55. āu nāgā prathamāṁśa (The Ao Naga 1st part), Surendranath Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 24 A.R., 1324 B.S., p. 46, read in S.P. Gauhati branch on 25th Phālgun, 1324, 9th year, 5th meeting.
56. āu nāgā—śeṣāṁa (The Ao Naga—last part), Surendranath Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 24 A.R., 1324 B.S., p. 46, read in S.P. Gauhati branch on 7th Vaiśākha, 1325, 9th year, 6th meeting.
57. badarpurer kellā o śilālipi (The Badarpur fort and its rock inscription), Birajākānta Ghosh, S. P.Panj., 25 A.R., 1325 B.S., p. 54, read in S.P.P. Rangpur branch on 22nd Bhadra, 1325, (Sunday).
58. bāṇ o soṇitpur, Umeshchandra De, Navyabhārat, Jyaiṣṭha and Āsaḍha, 1316, read in G.V.S.S., 3rd meeting on 12th Vaiśākha, 1316, U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gauripur, R. pt. I, pp. 97-98.
59. bāṅglā bhāṣāy āsāmer itihās (History of Assam in Bengali), Suryyakumar Bhuyan, S.P.P., 1333 No. 1, pp. 19-35, read in S.P.Gauhati branch, 3I A.R., p. 21 and p. 29.
60. bargīt, Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 30 A.R., 1330 B.S., p. 41, read in S. P. Gauhati branch.
61. bhagadatta vaṁśīya rājāgaṇer rājdhānīr paricay (Introduction to the capital of the kings of Bhagadatta dynasty), Umeschandra Burman, R.S.P.P., 1344 No.1, pp. 13-21, read in S. P. Rangpur branch on 30th Phālgun, 1343, 32nd year 4th meeting.
62. bhakta nārāyaṇdās ṭhākur (Nārāyaṇdās Ṭhākur, a devotee), Umeshchandra De, S.P.P., 1319 No. 2, pp. 113-124, read in S. P. Gauhati branch on 26th Śrāvaṇa, 1319, in the 1st monthly meeting.
63. bhāskarvarmā o vincenṭ smith (Bhāskarvarman and Vincent Smith), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. XI, No. 8, 1328/ Agrahāyaṇa, pp. 285-287.
64. bhāskarvarmār nasta kalpanā (The wide imagination of King Bhaskaravarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Navayuga, 1328/ Jyaiṣṭha.
65. bhāskarvarmār tāmraśāsan (Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 7, 1319 No. 4, pp. 182-204, read in S. P. Rangpur branch on 21st Vaiśākha, 1320, on the 2nd day of 9th annual metting. This article was translated into Assamese and published in the Āsām Bāndhav.
66. bhāskarvarmār tāmra-śāsan (Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Sāhitya, 1320/Pauṣa, p. 240.
67. bhāskarvarmār tamrā-śāsan (Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. 12, No. I, 1329 Vaiśakha-Āṣaḍha, pp. 23-32.

68. bhāskarvarmār tāmra śāsan (Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. 13, N. 2, 1330/Śrāvaṇa Āśvina, pp. 81-91.
69. bhāskarvarmār tāmra śāsan (Copperplate grant of Bhāskarvarman), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Brāhmaṇ Samāj, Vol. 12, No. 6, 1330/Phālgun.
70. bhīsmak o kundil (King Bhīṣmaka and Kuṇḍila), Devanarayan Ghosh, read in G.V.S.S., 7th meeting on 12th Agrahāyaṇa, 1316 B.S., U.V.S.S., 3rd session, Gauripur, R. pt. I, p. 100.
71. brahmaputra upatyakār lekhya o kathya śabda (Written and spoken words of the Brahmaputra Valley), Devanarayan Ghosh, S.P.P., 1319 B.S.
72. brahmaputra upatyakār prācīn kavi (Old poets of the Brahmaputra Valley) Devanarayan Ghosh, S.P.P., 1315 No. 4, pp. 244-248.
73. dharmapāler pratham tāmraśāsan (The first copperplate grant of Dharmapāla), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., 1344 No. 1, p. 28, S.P.Panj., 38 A.R. 1338 B.S., p. 33, read in S.P. Rangpur branch in 1338 B.S.
74. dharmapāler tāmraśāsan (A copperplate grant of Dharmapāla), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 10, 1322 No. 2, pp. 70-82, read in S.P. Rangpur branch in 5th monthly sitting, on 27th Caitra, 1322 B.S.
75. dīpikā chand (A book), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1319 No. 1, pp. 45-58.
76. dui khāni asamīyā puthi—kathā-bhāgavata o sukanānni (Two Assamese manuscripts—the Katha-Bhagavat and Sukanānnī) Gopalkrishna De, S.P.P., 1318 No. 2, pp. 113-122, read in G.V.S.S., 15th meeting.
77. gauhāṭir bhāgya vivartan (Change of Gauhati's fortune), Bhubanmohan Sen, S.P.Panj., 29 A.R., 1329 B.S., p. 44, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
78. gauhāṭir nūtan tāmraśāsan (A new copperplate grant of Gauhati), Kailaschandra Sinha Vidyabhūṣan, S.P.P., 1319 No. 1, pp. 1-5.
79. gauhāṭīte paṇḍitā ramābāi (Paṇḍitā Ramābāi at Gauhati), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 31 A.R., 1331 B.S., p. 30, read in S.P. Gauhati branch in its 16th year.
80. gosāi o bhakat (The Vaiṣṇava abbot and monks), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1320/Jyaiṣṭha, pp. 107-112.
81. harjardever tāmraśāsaner madhya phalak (The middle plate of Harjaradeva's copperplate grant), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. 18, No. 1-4, 1335/Vaiśākha—Caitra, pp. 17-20.
82. harjardever tejapurastha pāṣāṇ gātralipi (Harjaradeva's rock inscription of Tezpur), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Pratibhā, Vol. 17, No. 3-4, 1334/Kārtika—Caitra.

83. herambarājyer ṛṇadāna vidhi (Money-lending rules in the principality of Heramba), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P., 1327 No. 2, pp. 25-37, S.P.Panj., 27 A.R., 1327 B.S., p. 27-31 ; read on 5th Vaiśākha 1327, on the 10th monthly meeting.

84. indrapāler dvitīa tāmraśāsan (The second copperplate grant of Indrapāla) Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., 1336 No. 1-4, p. 31-41, read in S.P. Rangpur branch.

85. indrapāler tāmraśāsan (Copperplate grant of Indrapāla), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 7, 1319 No. 2, pp. 81-92, S.P.Panj., 33 A.R., 1333 B.S., p. 50, read in S.P. Rangpur branch.

86. indrapāler tāmraśāsan (Copperplate grant of Indrapāla), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 7, 1319 No. 4, pp. 153-160.

87. iṅgrāj rājatver prākkāle āsāmer śikṣā o bāṇijyer avasthā (The condition of education and commerce in Assam before the English rule), Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyaya, S.P.Panj., 25 A.R. 1325 B.S., p. 60, read in S.P. Gauhati branch on 12th Āśvin, 1325.

88. kadalī rājya (The Kadalī state), Rajmohan Nath, S.P.P., 1347 No. 4, pp. 254-263.

89. kāmākhyā bhramaṇ (Travels in Kāmākhyā), Prafullachandra Sen, Pravāsī, 1322/Āśvin, pp. 715-718.

90. kāmākhyā mandir (The temple of Kāmākhyā), Hemchandra Goswami, S.P.P., 1325 No. 2, pp. 77-82, read in S.P. Gauhati branch on 29th Bhādra, 1324, at 9th year, 1st sitting.

91. kāmākhyā śaila (The Kāmākhyā hill), Navyabharat, 1309 B.S., A rejoinder to this article was referred to in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā, R. p. 24.

92. kāmarūpa anusandhān samitir dvitīya varṣer āṁśik kārya-vivaraṇ (A portion of the second annual report of the Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti), Kalicharan Sen, R.S.P.P., 1320 No. 3-4, pp. 143-147 ; read in U.V.S.S., 7th session at patna, 1321 B.S., R. p. 28.

93. kāmarūpa anusandhān samitir pratham vārṣik kārya vivaraṇi (The first annual report of Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti), U.V.S.S., 6th session, Dinajpur, R. 1324 B.S., p. 100.

94. kāmarūpa o asamīyā granthavivaraṇ (Notes on Kāmarūpa and Assamese manuscripts), Pratapchandra Goswami Vidyāvinod, read in S.P. Rangpur branch on 19th Bhādra, 1339 in its 28th year 5th special sitting.

95. kāmarūpa rājamālā (The kings of Kāmarūpa, Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., 1322 No. 2, p. 70.

96. kāmarūpa rājāvalī (The kings of Kāmarūpa), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Kamala, Vol. 2, No. 8-9, 1332 Agrahāyaṇa & Pauṣa, pp. 351-364.

97. kāmarūpa rājāvalī (The kings of Kāmarūpa), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, ,Kamalā, Vol. 2, No. 10-12, 1332 Māgh—Caitra pp. 393-399.
98. kāmarūpe koc rājakīrti (Glory of Koc kings of Kāmarūpa), Padmacharjya, S.P.Panj., 27 A.R., 1327 B.S., p. 63 ; read in S.P. Gauhati branch on 21st Caitra, 1327, on its 3rd meeting.
99. kāmarūpe koc rājakīrti (Glory of Koc kings of Kāmarūpa), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Paricārikā, 1328/Aśvin.
100. kāmarūpe kṣatriya jāti (The Kṣatriyas of Kāmarūpa), Gopalkrishna De, read in Kāmarūpa Anusandān Samiti, an Assamese translation of this article by Gaurikanta Talukdar was published in the Āsām Bāndhav in 1320/Kārtika.
101. kāmarūper itihāser upakaraṇ (Materials for a history of Kāmarūpa) Nagendranath Basu, Prācyavidya-mahārṇava, R.S.P.P., 1321 No. 2, 3, 4, pp. 82-91.
102. kāmarūper prācīn rāja-vaṁśa, pratham o dvitīya aṁśa (The ancient royal families of Kāmarūpa, first and second parts), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.Panj., 31 A.R., 1331 B.S., p. 29, read in S.P. Vārāṇasī branch in 1331 B.S.
103. kāmarūper sāmājik prathā (Social customs of Kāmarūpa), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 99, read in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā on 25th Caitra, 1318.
104. kāmarūper śilālipi (Rock inscription of Kāmarūpa), Ganapati Sarkar Vidyaratna, S.P.P., 1325 No. 4, pp. 187-212, S.P.Panj., 25 A.R., 1325 B.S., p. 22, read in the monthly sitting on 5th Āśvina, 1325.
105. kāmatā-biharī bhāśā sambandhe yatkiñcit (A few remarks on Kamatā-Bihārī language), Purnendumohan Sehanobis, S.P.P., 1318 No. 4, pp. 219-226, U.V.S.S., 4th session, at Maldha, 1318 B.S., R p. 75.
106. kāmatā-bihārī sāhitya (The Kamata-Bihari literature), Panchanan Sarkar, U.V.S.S., 3rd session at Gauripur, R. pt. 2, pp. 96-125, 1317 B.S.
107. kāmatā-biharī sāhitya sambandhe yatkiñcit (A few remarks on Kāmatā-Bihārī literature), Purnendumohan Sehanabis, S.P.Panj., 17 A.R., 1317 B.S., p. 27, read in U.V.S.S., 4th session at Maldah on 26th Pauṣh, 1317.
108. khāsiā jāti o bhāṣa (The Khāsi tribe and its language), Saradacharan Dhar, S.S.P.P., 2nd year, No. 4, 1344/Magh, pp. 105-112.
109. kṛttivās o mādhav kandalir rāmāyaṇ (Kṛttivās and Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa), read in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā on 24th Caitra, 1318, R., p. 63 ; S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 98.
110. lothā nāgā (The Lhotā Nāgās), Surendranath Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 25 A.R., 1325 B.S., p. 59 ; read in S.P. Gauhati branch in the first sitting of 1325 B.S.

111. mahāpuruṣīyā sampradāya (The Mahāpuruṣīyā sect), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Dacca Review, 1318/Āṣaḍha.
112. memī nāgā (The Memī Nāgās), Surendranath Majumdar, S.P.Panj., 30 A.R., 1330 B.S., p. 41, read in S.P. Gauhati branch in 1330 B.S.
113. mikir jāti (The Mikir tribe), Nalinikanta Bhadra, S.S.P.P., 3rd year, No. 3, 1345/Kārtika, pp. 1-16.
114. miri jāti (The Miri tribe), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 30 A.R., 1330 B.S., p. 41, read in S.P. Gauhati branch in 1330 B.S.
115. miri jāti vivaraṇ (An account of Mīri tribe), Gopalkrishna De, S.P. Panj., 29 A.R., 1329 B.S., p. 45, read in S.P. Gauhati branch in 1329 B.S.
116. nāmghoṣā o kathāghoṣā, Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 20 A.R., 1320 B.S., p. 18, read in S.P. Gauhati branch in 1320/Āśvin.
117. paraśurām kuṇḍa, Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Vaṇga Sāhitya, Vol. 18, No. 3.
118. paraśurām kuṇḍa, Padmanath Bhattacharjya, Vaṇga-Vāṇī, 13th Jaiṣtha, 1330.
119. paraśurām kuṇḍa—sacitra, Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 5, 1317 No. 3-4, pp. 110-122, read in S.P. Rangpur branch on 5th monthly sitting in 1317 B.S., 6 A.R., p. 35.
120. prācīn kāmarūpa (The ancient Kāmarūpa), Dharmakanta Kavyavyakarantirtha, S.P.Panj., 18 A.R., 1318 B.S., p. 96, read in U.V.S.S., 5th session at Kāmākhyā on 24th Caitra, 1318 B.S., p. 77.
121. prācīn kāmarūpa (The ancient Kāmarūpa), Gopalkrishna De, R.S.P.P., 1322 No. 2, p. 70, read in U.V.S.S., 4th session at Maldah, R. p. 126.
122. prācīn kāmarūpa (The ancient Kāmarūpa), Sureshchandra Bandyodadhyaya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 1, No. 1, read in S.P. Rangpur branch in its first meeting of 1312 B.S.
123. prācīn kāmarūpa (The ancient Kāmarūpa), Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyaya, S.P.Panj., 38 A.R., 1338 B.S., p. 93, read in S.P. Gauhati branch.
124. prācīn kāmarūpa o asamīyā granthavivaraṇ (Ancient Kāmarūpa and notices of Assamese books), Pratapchandra Goswami, S.P.Panj., 39 A.R., 1339 B.S., p. 27, read in S.P. Rangpur branch.
125. prācīn kāmarūper jātiya itihāser ek pṛṣṭhā (One page from old Kāmarūpa's national history), Dwarakanath Sinha, read in S.P. Rangpur branch in 1344 B.S.
126. prācīn kāmarūper rājamālā (The rulers of ancient Kāmarūpa), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, S.P.P. 1320 No. 3, pp. 189-194, read in the 5th monthly meeting of 20th year, S.P.Panj., 20 A.R., 1320 B.S., p. 11 and 27.

127. prācīn kāmarūper śāsan-nīti (The administrative system in ancient Kāmarūpa), Rajmohan Nath, S.S.P.P., 1348/Māgh, pp. 63-78, read in S.S.P., on 9th November, 1941 (A.D.).

128. prācīn kāmarūpī bhāṣā (Old Kāmrūpī language), Amritabhushan Adhikārī, read in U.V.S.S., 3rd session at Gauripur in 1316, R. pt. 2, pp. 171-196, 1317 B.S.

129. rāmāyaṇer dharmāraṇya o prājyotiṣ (The Dharmāraṇya of the Rāmāyaṇa and Prāgjyotiṣa), Gopalkrishna De, S.P.Panj., 17 A.R., 1317 B.S., p. 26, read on 26th Pauṣa, 1317 B.S.

130. rāṇī jayamatī, Gopalkrishna De, Bhāratmahilā, 1316 B.S., read in G.V.S.S., 2nd meeting on 15th Caitra, 1315, U.V.S.S., 3rd session at Gauripur, R. pt. I, p. 97.

131. ratnapāler tāmraśāsan (Copperlate grant of Ratnapāla), Padmanath Bhattacharjya, R.S.P.P., Vol. 10, 1322 No. 1, pp. 12-33, read in S.P. Rangpur branch, 10th year, 4th monthly sitting on 20th Agrahāyaṇa, 1321 B.S.

132. rudrasiṁher tāmraśāsan (Copperplate grant of Rudrasiṁha), Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyaya, R.S.P.P., 1317 No. 1, pp. 41-46, read in S.P. Rangpur branch in its 8th monthly sitting of 1316 B.S.

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The Growth of Tea Industry in Assam

By

AJIT KUMAR SHARMA

1

With the annexation of Assam by the British in the second decade of the 19th century, an independent country of the past rapidly passed into a colony of the East India Company. There were few provinces "the lands and climate of which were more favourable than those of Assam for some of the great articles of trade." Assam had four great assets ; land, rivers, forests and minerals. "The extraordinary fertility of the soil of Assam, its capabilities as a great rice producing country, its almost unknown and unexplored mineral treasures—coal, iron, gold and other metals, its magnificent forests, in short, its almost unrivalled resources which awaited development"—all these had a magnetic atraction to the British private capital, already surplus in its home, soon after the British managed to have their political control over this part of our country. Within a few years, Assam became the most profitable and "the most interesting and enterprising corner of His Majesty's Dominion."

Though, in the beginning, the British capitalists employed their capital in enterprise like tea, coal, petroleum, timber, cotton, gold, caoutchouc gum, etc., later on, they solely concentrated on the first four because these proved to be much more paying than others. Tea was the first field for investment of British capital to be followed by railways, steamer navigation, coal, timber and oil.

2

Simultaneously with the growth of jute and other industries around the city of Calcutta in the 1830's, the British started tea plantations in the forests of Assam. It' was the time when the British East India Company had lost its monopoly over the tea trade in China and the necessity for employment of the idel capital elsewhere was compelling ; and India was its chosen field. The Government itself had started an experimental tea garden in 1835, and tea was first shipped to England in 1838. In the meantime, the Assam Company was formed in 1839 and the Bengal Tea Association, constitude earlier, was amalgamated with it to become the first British tea company in Assam. It is interesting that it was named Assam Company and not Assam Tea Company, although tea was the main object of enterprise. The reason for ommitting 'Tea' was that those who launched the company were aware of the "existence of lime, coal and oil in the soil, and gold in the rivers of Assam" and, therefore, had already fixed their eyes on the possibility of developing all of them. Immediately after this company had been started, the Government withdrew from the field and handed over its experimental garden to it "rent-free for ten years." Five years later, the Act No XIX of 1845, incorporating the Assam Company, conferred on it all facilities asked for, so as to enable it to carry on production of tea and other articles with greater advantage and profit", and to help it in increasing its capital stock. The company was authorised to take or hold or make any such grants, leases or purchases or other acquisitions of land in perpetuity or for any term of years and also to sell or dispose of and alienate them. Initially the Government helped the company with a grant of 33,665 acres of land under the Special Grant Rules, according to which one fourth of the grant was to be in cultivation by the expiry of the fith year from the date of the grant, one-fourth to be held in perpetuity revenue-free ; and on the remaining portion no revenue was to be paid up to 20 years. Added to this land-gift, the company was assisted by the Government through various kinds of subsidies for transport, construction of roads, etc ;

By further liberalizing the rules for grant of lands the government began to offer rich waste lands on "any terms that would induce the introduction of European enterprise and foreign labour into a country so fertile and so rich in vegetables and mineral production intersected in its whole length by a river so favourable to steam navigation as the Burrampotter," and the British capitalists in larger number pounced upon this golden opportunity to make fortunes. "The promulgation of the Fee-Simple Rules of 1861 was followed by a rush for land, which was aggravated by the orders of the Board of Revenue who authorized District Officers to sell estates on a pen and ink sketch made by the applicant before they had been surveyed and demarcated. Land thus obtained was hastily cleared of jungle. A few plants, the majority of which soon died, were hurriedly put out, and the place was sold to the unsuspecting public as a flourishing tea garden. This procedure was carried to such a hysteric pitch that there is an incident on record in which a manager received instructions from London to clear and plant a certain area of waste land for delivery to a company to whom it had been already sold as a tea garden. In fact, a speculative market on land was vigorously started by the British capitalists along with their cultivation of tea.

From 1859 onwards it was a period of phenomenal exapansion for the tea industry in Assam. Companies in increasing number were registered in England. Next to the Assam Co. Ltd., the biggest tea company that commenced its business was the Joarhaut Tea Company, started in 1859. Within a period of six years (1859-1864) as many as 15 new companies were registered and along with them, an almost equal number of unregistered companies also began plantation. While the cost of opening a garden was nominal, the profits from it were constantly rising. The conditions were so alluring that many managers and assistant managers in the companies resigned their jobs and took up lands for independent tea plantation.

By the close of the century, all the British companies that are now controlling tea in Assam, were launched. A total area of about 11 lakh acres of land was transferred to their possession.

3

The British Zamindari system was thus firmly established in the tea estates. From their very start these estates yielded large profits and fattened the capital of their owners. But the profits to British capital brought in evil days for the peasants of the surrounding villages. While the Government was all-in-attention to serve the tea planters, it had no time or intention to show any consideration to the wants and requirements of the indigenous cultivators, who were deprived even of the grazing lands for their cattle. In Upper Assam, especially in the Lakhimpur district, backward sections of the people were pushed by tea gardens further into the interior. The extension of tea industry threatened the hill-men also; and to protect the planters the Government put into operation the 'Inner Line Regulations' in the frontier regions.

By the first decade of the present century the corroding impact of the British capital was more increasingly felt by the people. Especially, the resentment in the minds of the upper classes of Assamese society grew. The Government foresaw the danger, and realized the necessity of associating Indian capital in the industry so as "to minimise the risk of greater opposition" to the ever increasing British capital. Indian capitalists were, therefore, encouraged to start tea plantations specially after the 1921 Civil Disobedience Movement. It may be noted here that till the last decade of the 19th century there were only three or four wealhy Assamese gentlemen taking to tea cultivation. The earliest attempt o compete with the British capitalists was made by Maniram Dewan (who is regarded as the first discoverer of indigenous tea plant), who was hanged in 1858 as the prime mover of the 1857 rebellion in Assam.

It may be mentioned that till the end of the 19th century, apart from Maniram Dewan, few Indians took to tea cultivation. In the 'sixties of that century Roseswar Barua started 6 tea gardens in the Sibsagar district. But, during the economic depression of 1866, he had to sell most of his gardens to British companies. After him, among those who commenced their career as tea-planters and established themselves in the industry, mention may be made of Hemadhar Barua and his illustrious son, Rai Bahadur Jagannath Barua, Rai Bahadur Bisturam Barua and his son, Rai Bahadur Siba Prasad Barua, Gangagovinda Phukan, Someswar Sharma, Krishna Kanta Hatibarua, Rai Bahadur Debicharan Barua, Malbhog Barua, Narayan Bezbarua, Haribilas Agarwala, Kaliprasad Chaliha, Ghanashyam Barua and Radhakanta Handique.

But, by the time Indian capitalists entered tea, the best part of land suitable for cultivation of this crop had already been settled with the British companies with their monopoly hold, and the earlier rules for grant of lands were also modified by the Government and their application restricted.

It is difficult to get accurate figures of the British companies in Assam at different periods. In 1926-27 the total area in tea garden grants was placed at 15,77,048 acres (Memorandum of the Government of Assam to the Indian Statutory Commission). Taking 90% of this total, the acreage under occupation of British companies comes to 14,19,344. This shows an increase of about 3 lakh acres between 1900 and 1926. Since 1947 a number of British tea estates have been transferred to Indian hands. According to a statement by the Union Minister of Agriculture in the Lok Sabha in September 1956, the total area held by European tea companies that year was 8,84,000 acres. On the basis of the plantation Enquiry Commission's Report this area was 7,96,904 (taking 80% of the total to be foreign possession). These figure, judged in the background of the statement of the Government of Assam in 1926-27, seems to be far less than what it should be or is at present. Even after making due allowance for the transfers of ownership, erosion by the Brahmaputra and requistion by the Government, the total land under foreign occupation cannot be less than 10 lakh acres.

And, how are these vast tracts of land utilized? In February, 1956 the Union Minister concerned confessed in the Rajya Sabha that he could not acount for more than one million acres lying in the tea gardens unutilized. The Plantation Enquiry Commission, however, gives the following details relating to all the tea gardens (foreign and Indian) in Assam :

Total area	9,96,129	acres
Area under tea	3,76,033	"
Lands ancilliary to tea cultivation	49,421	"
Bamboo bāri	75,085	"
Forest other than bamboos	2,23,285	"
Sungrass bāri	58.969	"
Fisheries	534	"
Khet land	2,13,702	"

From the available statistics it is found that even in 1958 only one-fourth of the tea estates was brought under tea cultivation. In 39 European companies, out of a total estate area of 8,14,307 acres under their occupation, only 200035 acres were planted in 1946, rising to 2,14,205 acres in 1957. The Plantation Enquiry Commission holds these lands in excess of the cultivated area to the mostly unsuitable for tea, but, as shown above, these are better fitted for growing rice and other crops.

Having acquired these extensive tracts of excess land practically as free gifts 60 to 100 years back, the British companies started profiteering in their sale also. As early as 1861, the Assam Company sold some parts of its estates at high prices and thus added to its capital. In 1895, when the Government of India wanted land for the construction of railway, the tea companies demanded as high a price as Rs. 200 per acre. Lands which were originally purchased by the companies at a nominal price of Rs. 2 to 3 per acre were resold to the Government at Rs. 133 per acre. At present also the Government of Assam, while requisitioning these excess tracts for the purpose of settling indigenous landless cultivators, have started paying enormous compensations to these companies. This is how the process of accumulation of unearned incomes and the progress of exploitation by foreign capital continues. Apart from the inestimable damage done to the people, the Government of Assam has suffered a loss of more than Rs. 10 crores upto 1951 on account of the concessional grants alone. The following table, prepared by the Assam Government in 1951, will give the details :

Nature of grant	Area in acres	Revenue calculated at usual rate	Amount actually realized due to concessional terms	Loss
			Rs.	Rs.
(A) Grant under Rules of 1858 (45 years)	5,237	4,71,330	1,50,799	3,20,531
(B) Grant under Lease Rules of 1854 (99 yrs)	27,521	53,39,074	6,25,250	47,13,824
(C) Grant under Fee-Simple Rules of 1862 & 1874	1,92,295	3,34,28,510	3,84,590	3,30,43,920
(D) Redeemed Grant	2,80,730	4,82,85,560	42,10,950	4,40,74,610
(E) Grant under Lease Rules of 1876 (30 yrs.)	5,00,000	3,00,00,000	79,05,375	2,20,94,725
	10,05,783	11,75,24,474	1,32,26,864	10,42,97,610

In his Budget Speech of 1950-51 the then Finance Minister of Assam, expressing his distress at the sight of the poverty of his exchequer and his resentment against the Central Government's policy, said, "For the development and encouragement of this Tea Industry, Assam had to sacrifice not less than 25 crores of rupees in the shape of revenue and other concessions in respect of fee-simple and other grants offered at nominal revenue. As a result, the most prosperous village industries like silk-weaving and rearing which were once the pride of the province, gradually went into decay for want of adequate financial help; and the population became solely dependent on agriculture. But for thiis concession it is doubtful if the industry which is now one of the best dollar-earners would have developed and have such prosperity and enable the Centre to raise Rs. 2 crores in the shape of excise duty and about Rs. 3 crores as export duty." Of the loss of Rs. 25 crores mentioned above, more than 20 crores were on account of the foreign tea companies.

4

Now, let us turn to another aspect of colonial exploitation through the tea industry. This industry is regarded as 60% agriculture and 40% industry. At what tremendous cost to our people the 60% of it has been developed has been shown above. The story of the remaining 40% is equally staggering.

Initially the British companies faced certain handicaps in the matter of transport and supply of labour. But the Government immediately came to its aid by removing the first. Costs of constructing roads were paid by the Government; steamer services were provided, and concessional rates were allowed for carrying imported labourers to Assam; and grants, subsidies and concessions for the purpose of opening railway lines and for running river-transport services were available for the mere asking. In the meantime (1846) the Government permitted Assam Company to ship labourers for their tea plantations at Gauhati on board the Government steamers at the rate of 8 rupees a head for adults instead of the regulated charge of 18 rupees and 4 rupees a head for children (Revenue Letters from Bengal, 30th November 1848).

So far as the supply of labour was concerned, it is true it was not available locally in adequate number. The tea companies had to depend on the recruitment of Adivasis of Chota Nagpur, Orissa as well as others from Bengal. The suppression of the 1857 revolution, and its consequential effects, and the recurring famines and pestilences were utilized by the British financiers to their full advantage. How inhumanly they planned exploition of the poverty of our people was revealed in a letter, dated 4th March 1861, from George Williamson Jr. of the Jorehaut Tea Company to the Directors. He wrote : "Disproportion of sexes or want of women being one of the causes of the discontented and unsettled feeling amongst our imported coolies, it has occurred to me that something might possibly be done in conjunction with the Relief Committee of the North-West for the transport of a number of women to Assam. It would certainly be a most effectual mode of relief and I should fancy the Mutiny must have left a large number of widows and orphans in a comparatively destitute state, on whom the present distress will fall most heavily and who would most likely be easily induced to emigrate." Wretched people were thus enticed through contractors and bought. They were carried in steamers in inhuman conditions; many of them died in course of their journey.

Sir Henry Cotton in his *Indian and Home Memories* tells us that "except in famine or destitution years they (the tea industry) could not get the labour they wanted for their gardens." Describing the pitiable condition of the labourers in the tea gardens, Henry Cotton says: "I showed that there was a regularly established business of buying and selling labour, and that employers were paying at scheduled rates for every labourer recruited under penal contract, a sum varying from Rs. 120 to Rs. 150. I pointed out how these transactions were a great curse to the recruiting district. In too many instances the recruiters resorted to criminal means, inducing their victim by misrepresentation or by threats to accompany them to a contractor's depot or railway station, where they were spirited away before their absence was noted by their friends or relations. The records of the criminal courts teemed with instances of fraud, abduction of married women and young persons, wrongful confinement, intimidation, and actual violence—in fact, a tale of crime and outrage which would arouse a storm of public indignation in many a civilized country. In India the facts were left to be recorded without notice by a few officials and missionaries."

The *History of the Jorehaut Tea Company* proudly records that the famine of 1873 and similar scarcity conditions during 1896-1905 and partial famine conditions in 1907-1908 in the labour recruiting districts greatly facilitated its acquistion of much needed new labour in large numbers at a very cheap price. In 1918 there was a severe epidemic of influenza which killed many labourers in the tea gardens. Yet, the after-effect of it was a big gain to the tea companies in Assam. In the case of the Jorehaut Tea Company, "as has been previously experienced in times of famines, there was afterwards a freer movement of labour from the recruiting districts to the tea districts". In 1919 this Company made up its loss by successful recruting of 5,500 new labourers including families.

Once these helpless labourers were trapped into the tea estate there was no going back for the large part of them, although legally they could return to their homes after the expiry of the agreement period. In 1861 a new trap of Coolie Agreement Bonus was laid. A labourer who, after completing his three years' agreement period, signed this bonus agreement was paid Rs. 5. For cheaper and efficient recruitment of labour the tea companies started the Tea District Labour Supply Association in 1892. The European tea-planters organized the Indian Tea Districts Association in 1881 so as to make their collective position stronger. The Association was the origin of the present Indian Tea Association. With active assistance from the Government, the I. T. A. stood against the labour as a monstrous giant. It also succeeded in preventing any Trade Union organisation of labour till only a few years ago. The labourers were kept in abject servitude. Cash wages paid to them were wholly inadequate and they were denied freedom of movement and association. Even in the changed context, since Independence, the I. T. A. has continued its game of expropriating nearly 9 lakh labourers in the estates under its organisation.

5

As pointed out above, British capital entered Assam in the 1830's. What amount of capital was exactly employed by the British companies initially and in course of their continuing domination is very difficult to ascertain. It is, however, a fact that a large part of the capital has been made up of mysterious earnings. An accurate calculation of its capital has been rendered still more difficult by its partnership with Indian capitalists since Independence. Neither the Government of India nor the Plantation Inquiry Commission has succeeded in assessing the extent of foregn capital actually invested. In his dissenting note to the P.I.C.'s Report K. G. Sivaswamy has made an important observation on this point. According to him the growth of paid-up capital from 1939 to 1953 for the companies under various tpes of foreign management shows that the increase is not very significant. What lattle increase there has been, is almost wholly accounted for by the issue of bonus-shares or rise in the face-value of shares. The capitalisation of reserves, he further observes, may not in itself be objectionable so long as it does not lead to overcapitalisation or any abuse; but when these reserves are created by revaluing fixed assets and transferring the increased valuation as capital reserves, as has been done by many companies, and these reserves are then utilised for augmenting the share-capital, the share-capital seems to have little relations to actual investment.

But such revaluation of assets has continued to be a predominant feature of these tea companies. The increase in the valuation of fixed assets has occured especially after 1946. A few instances are given below :

Name of the Company	Capital (in £)			
	1946	1952	1956	1957
1. Achabam Tea Co.	—	—	3,08,147	3,87,732
2. Assam Co.	10,00,000	—	—	15,00,000
3. Chabua Tea Co.	—	—	1,59,000	2,38,500
4. Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Co.	—	—	6,13,800	10,30,200
5. Tingri Tea Co.	—	—	1,34,373	2,68,746

The following figures from the balance-sheet of the Achabam Tea Co. (which is a comparatively small concern with only one estate) will further clarify the position.

	1956	1957
Capital issued & Reserve	£ 1,26,270	£ 1,60,770
Capital invested	£ 3,08,147	£ 3,87,732

The *History of the Assam Co.* also reveals that it started adding to its capital through the sale of its estates as early as 1861. Such sales enabled the Company that year to make the real worth of its properties far exceed its paid-up capital.

The investment of foreign capital in tea in Assam, as assessed by different authorities, stands as follows :

Year	Amount (in crores of Rs.)
1900-1910	Rs. 10.5
1928	Rs. 19.5
1948-49	Rs. 20.07
1954	Rs. 25.75

The above figures are worked out by taking 60% of the total investment in tea in India to be in Assam.

Statements in the various Tea Directories show that in 61 of the British tea companies covering almost half the total area under tea, the capital invested in 1957 was Rs. 22.47 crores. On this basis, not more than Rs. 44 or Rs. 45 crores were invested in foreign tea estates in this year.

The above assessments, including that of the P.I.C., however, do not explain the real situation. The veil around foreign capital is too thick to penetrate. This peculier phenomenon was explained to some extent, of course unknowingly, in the Assam Government's Memorandum to the Statutory Commission in 1928. It referred to two aspects of the capital and said that in that year the "nominal capital" in foreign tea companies was 19.5 crores and the "real capital" was 29.5 crores. The "nominal capital" represents the actual investment by the share-holders and it constitutes only 2/5ths. of the "real capital" which means actual investment plus revalued assets.

After making allowance for possible errors of calculation the total amount of actual investment of British capital in Assam tea may be safely placed at not more than Rs. 18 to 19 crores ; though the "real capital" shown to be near 45 crores of rupees.

6

Progressing through the process of acquisition of lands by concession, of labour through exploitation and of capital through revaluation, the Britishowned tea estates have repatriated profits equal to their inflated investment every five years. Since 1850 different tea companies in Assam have looted, in the shape of profits, 50 to 80 times their "nominal capital" and 16 to 24 times their "real capital." This is, however, a modest estimate, because tea industry has provided a continuously high return on capital. Even during a period of crisis like 1950-1954 the average profit has not dipped beneath 15%. In this period, profits in tea industry in India as a whole were as mentioned below :

Year	*Net profit*	*Gross profit*
1950	16.5%	33.5%
1951	8.6%	17.2%
1952	nil	2.6%
1953	21.5%	35.0%
1954	30.6%	48.9%
Average net profit	15.4%	
Average gross profit	27.5%	

As the above figures include profit and loss of the Indian tea gardens also, the average of the European sector of the industry, specially in Assam, will be much higher.

The published accounts of the two oldest companies in Assam, the Assam Co. Ltd., and the Jorehaut Tea Co, Ltl., further show that while the first with an initial capital of £ 1,25,000 collected a total net profit of £1,02,89,847 from 1840 to 1954; the second, starting with an investment of £ 60,000, had a total return of similar profit of £ 98,10,771 from 1859 to 1945.

7

The above analysis inevitably leads us to the question as to why and how the British capital in tea has been allowed to carry on merrily with its game of exploitation even after 1947. The answer is, however, given by the *Survey of British Industrial Firms* published by the Federation of British Industries in India in 1956. Under the present policy of the Government of India the British capital is welcome and its profits are safe. The climate in India for U.K. investment is still favourable and British enterprises still enjoy a preference. The Government of India's policy to wait and see and encourage the British investors till they voluntarily retire, has helped them not only to bleed our people white but also to kill the tea industry slowly and steadily.

Immediately after Independence the Government of India could have taken over the tea estates under British ownership by paying through our accumulated Sterling Balance. But Government failed and the result was that only a few years later a huge amount of Sterling Balance was wiped out by devaluation. When, in 1947-48, many British investors in tea in Assam were counting their days in India and were getting ready to pack up, the Government of India's policy invited them to stay back. British capital stayed on, and proposes to continue till its interests are served. At present the Managing Agency at Calcutta Clive Street has combined with the new Managing Agency at New Delhi as a part of its new strategy.

This combination has procured a new set of supporters of continuation of foreign capital in the tea industry on the plea that this industry is one of the chief foreign-exchange earners. That such arguments are illusive has been admitted even by those who advocate the purchase of the foreign tea-estates with compensation. K. G. Sivaswamy points out: "Is it wrong again to compel an outside investment of 25% of net profits before tax which is what the non-Indian companies are at present investing as statutory reserves? Supported as they are by the Indian consumer, who is satisfied with a low grade tea, and in order to expand Indian consumption, they should in their own interest contribute to the cheap tea scheme. Having provided hese, they are free to do what they like with their profits. India loses, by not buying the non-Indian estates, a lot of foreign exchange surely needed for the Second Five Year Plan. It loses foreign exchange as a result of export to U. K. which re-exports to the U.S.A., Australia, Europe and Middle East." The loss to India in 1954 alone on account of foreign exchange, London expenses of these companies, repatriation of profits etc. was calculated at 17.23 crores.

The danger of encouraging foreign capital has already assumed threating proportions. From its defensive position in 1947-48 British capital has now taken an offensive stand. Since 1951-52 the British Tea Companies in Assam have been starting new tea estates in Africa by employing the capital accumulated out of their profits in Assam. Important tea companies referred to above have already diverted a large part of profits to Africa where they are now encouraged to establish plantations by the Government there through allocations of crownlands, financial credit and through local price-stabilization measures. The present attitude of foreign tea companies in India is made too transparent by the Tea & Rubber Mail. This British journal writes in 1955:

"Many strangers now appear in the tea cup, e.g., African states, Australia, etc. Should any of the countries that are now successfully producing tea, make life more difficult for the successors of the men who built up their important Tea Industry, or prove unhelpful when these men wish to return to work after holiday in the home country or hamper those who have provided essential capital from outside, might it not be a practical alternative for them to take up one of these 200 acre-farms in Australia?

The signal is clear. Just as the British companies left China when their monopoly in tea ceased and came to India, so also, under changed conditions they must leave India. That they are still reigning supreme is due to the blessings of the Government of India and the slumber of the people.

Nationalization of the foreign-owned tea estates without any more compensation is one of the first urgent measures that awaits a Government, representative of the people, in Assam and India. These companies have already been compensated for, more than 200 times their invested capital.

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